# The Five Retreats

A history of the failure of the Progressive Labor Party

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## **PREFACE**

This document is a product of the split that occurred in Progressive Labor Party (PLP) in April, 1977. At that time more than 70% of the San Francisco area of P.L.P., the second largest and the only area still engaged in mass struggle, quit the PLP *en masse*. Committed as before to the struggle for a revolutionary socialist solution to the crisis of U.S. monopoly capitalism we began a study of our past in order to understand our future tasks.

Why is the failure of PLP significant? Not because of what PL is today, for it is nothing more than one of the more insignificant of those multitude of little sects that call themselves the one and only revolutionary Party. Nor do we study PL primarily for what it was, even though PLP did leave its mark on history as the leading force in the San Francisco State Strike, the most significant student strike in U.S. history, as a crucial element in the 1964 Harlem Rebellion and in the L.A. Century City Demonstration that ended Lyndon Johnson's public speaking career, and as the key force that turned a number of radicals, especially those in SDS, toward working class politics. Yet that mark in itself is not reason enough for the production of this document.

We study the failure of PLP for what it could have become, not primarily for what it was and certainly not for what it is today. Progressive Labor Party could have become a genuine Marxist-Leninist Party in the heartland of U.S. imperialism, the acknowledged successor of the moribund Communist Party (CP) as leader of Left and progressive movements. This is what PLP might have become, and seemed on the verge of becoming in 1964-67. Unlike some communist parties abroad PLP did not fail because of bloody supression; it did not even receive the milder measure of repression imposed on the CPUSA. PLP died because of its own internal weaknesses that are natural in this period, but weaknesses that are avoidable. In studying the failure of PLP due to this internal disease we will study a fairly common disease in Marxist-Leninist Parties: the ultra leftist obsession with purity which leads only to pure isolation.

The contemporary period has seen the dissolution of the International Communist Movement, which until 1956 had seemed monolithic, prodigious and destined to bury capitalism and imperialism in short order. The big communist Parties, outwardly strong, but internally rotten with bourgeois influence, all sold out their revolu-

tionary principles in order to make peace with their local bourgeoisie and/or U.S. imperialism. Many of the *world's* communists followed their leaders into opportunism. For those who refused to revise their revolutionary birthright, it has been a difficult period. Some gave up the struggle; others began to compromise with opportunism a little, then a little more, and ended up revisionists themselves; a third group sank into petty nationalism. Others tried to protect themselves from all this by ultra-leftist, ultra-sectarian policies and theories. This was the road PLP took, and it led to the same ultimate futility and failure, as the other roads did.

Generally speaking, the course PLP pursued began with an overestimation of the power of revisionism. This was an understandable error given the havoc that revisionism wrought in the post-1956 period. But this over-estimation prevented PLP from analyzing political events concretely and dialectically. The first manifestation of this overestimation of revisionism was fear of revisionism that PL quit formations that were penetrated by the revisionist groups. The second manifestation was underestimation of imperialism. Since revisionism was so powerful, it was reasoned that in the conflict between imperialism and revisionism the main enemy was always the revisionists. This led to a general underestimation of the power of U.S. imperialists. The third manifestation was anarchist tactics. Since the imperialists were weak and the revisionists strong, it was natural for PLP to eschew the reform struggle (where revisionists were active) in favor of the individual exemplary action. The fourth manifestation was to equate racism with nationalism. Since racism was fostered by "weakened" imperialism, and nationalism was often allied with "all-powerful" revisionism, it was to be expected that PLP would emphasize more the struggle against nationalism than against racism. The fifth manifestation was an autocratic Party life which flowed from a conviction that PL and only PL was pure and that the new rank and file members brought revisionism and nationalism into the Party; therefore increasing authority had to be granted to the leaders lest the Party go revisionist.

In its prime PL was not paranoid about revisionism and had not yet to any large degree fallen victim to these fatal errors. In those days (1962-1965) PL felt itself a part of a huge world wide revolutionary movement that included the 17,000,000 member-Chinese Communist Party (CPC), the trailblazing Albanian Party of Labor, 6,000,000 revolutionary Cubans, North Korea, North Vietnam, the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front, Algeria, Buinea, the 3,000,000 strong Indonesian Communist Party, the majority of India's communists, the national liberation armies in Angola, Mozam-

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bique, Laos, Burma, Thailand, Zimbabwe, Guinea-Bissau, Venezuela, Guatemala, the large Japanese Communist Party, the Peoples' Progressive Party in Guyana, the Puerto Rican Independence Movement plus newly formed Marxist-Leninist parties in Belgium, Australia, Brazil and elsewhere. This massive movement of hundreds of millions was largely inspired by the outstanding revolutionary figure of our era, Mao-Tse-Tung. As a small but strategically located part of all this PLP was far from isolated, far from over-estimating revisionism and falling into sectarian errors. Yet this great movement did not hold together past 1965: The Cubans attacked the CCP and allied themselves with the revisionist USSR; the North Koreans moved in the same direction; the Indonesian CP was destroyed by U.S. imperialism as was the Venezuelan People's Army; the Japanese Communist Party and the main Indian communist party\* made their peace with their respective bourgeoisies. The Algerian Revolution grew conservative, inviting first the French and then the U.S. imperialists back in; there were splits in the movements in Angola and Mozambique, splits and disintegration in many of the new Marxist-Leninist Parties, backsliding in Guinea. The great anti-revisionist, revolutionary movement of 1963-1965 was breaking apart and PLP began to feel isolated. Having underestimated the influence of revisionism in the early period, PL overestimated the penetration of revisionism later on. What appeared to PLP to be backsliding in Vietnam confirmed PL in its fixation on revisionism. When the foreign policy of China appeared to veer to the Right after 1969. PL's worst fears were realized, and nothing after that shook PLP's obsession with revisionism and enchantment with ultra-leftism. A paralyzing fixation on modern revisionism replaced a balanced Marxist analysis, and the Party step-by-step fell victim to five main errors: (1) fear of revisionism, (2) under-estimating imperialism, (3) anarchist tactics, (4) equating racism and nationalism, and (5) autocratic party life. These errors led to successive retreats from the mass movement as we shall see. First they retreated from the anti-Vietnam war movement, secondly from the Black Liberation Movement, thirdly from the student movement, and fourthly from the trade-union movement. Finally there was a general retreat from Marxism-Leninism, scientific socialism. PLP's philosophy came to resemble more anarchism and utopian socialism than Marxism, more Trotskyism than Leninism, more subjective idealism than dialectical materialism.

We were long-term members and leaders of PLP. We shared in \*Communist Party of India (Marxist) entered the state government in West Bengal.

the responsibility for many of the errors and abuses that will be dealt with in the text. We also fought, within the narrow confines of our Party collectives, against some of the worst manifestations of the ultra-left line. In particular we opposed the equating of the racism of the oppressor which the nationalism of the oppressed, the escalating PLP verbal abuse of the Vietnamese liberation struggle, the retreat from fighting U.S. imperialism, and the anarchist line on the Soviet Union as it developed in the PL text "Road to Revolution III" (See Chapter 6), when we opposed the PL line on these and other questions, we were in the minority in the National Committee. But because of Party rules we were prohibited from involving the membership in our disagreements. Moreover, we failed at the time to connect all of the various deviations in a comprehensive political and historical analysis until the last year in the Party.

Therefore we hope this document will be of value, because the objective causes of the failure of PLP will undoubtedly be encountered in future attempts to build a revolutionary Party. These errors can be avoided if and only if it is understood where they will lead. Thus a history of the failure of PLP is useful and timely. "Those who won't learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

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# ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

AFT	American Federation of Teachers
BLM	Black Liberation Movement
BSU	Black Student Union
BPP	Black Panther Party
CAR	Committee Against Racism (PLP controlled.)
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CPUSA, CP	Communist Party U.S.A.
CWSA	Campus-Worker Student Alliance, strategy of PL student work
	after 1969.
HUAC	House Un-American Activities Committee of Congress
KKK	Ku Klux Klan
LSP	Liga Socialista Puertoriquena
MPI	Puerto Rican Independence Movement
M2M	May 2nd Movement
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NC	National Committee of Progressive Labor Party
NEP	New Economic Policy 1921-1926 in the Soviet Union
NLF	South Vietnamese National Liberation Front
NO	National Office of the Students for a Democratic Society
NSC	National Steering Committee of Progressive Labor Party, the
	executive to the NC
PL	Progressive Labor
PLM	Progressive Labor Movement
PLP	Progressive Labor Party
RNR	"Revolution Not Reform" (October, 1976) PLP's "operating a
	strategy."
ROAR	Restore Our Alienated Rights
RTR III	"Road to Revolution III," PL's theoretical foundation after 1971
RYM	Revolutionary Youth Movement, SDS faction run by the
	National Office cadre.
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
SLAP	Student Labor Action Plan, 1968 PL program for SDS.
SNCC	Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee, main civil rights
	organization in the South, 1962-1966.
SWP	Socialist Workers Party
T-U	trade-union
TWLF	Third World Liberation Front, alliance of minority student
,	groups at some West Coast campuses.
UAW	United Auto Workers
UFW	United Farmworkers' Union
WAM	Workers' Action Movement (PLP controlled.)
WSA	Worker Student Alliance, strategy of D. Strategy
	Worker Student Alliance, strategy of PL student work.

It was the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) that in essence founded the Progressive Labor Movement (PLM) and PLP. They provided the theoretical guidance to the young movement on all levels. The first theoretical piece of PLM, "Road to Revolution" (1963) was basically an Americanized version of the Polemical articles then appearing in the Chinese press. It was neither as clear nor as sharp\* as such Chinese masterpieces as "More on the Differences Between Comrade Togliatti & Us" or "Long Live Leninism." But since "Road to Revolution" hewed carefully to the line being put forward by the CPC it was a sound theoretical foundation on which to build a new party.

It was easy for the young PLM to become the early favorite of CPC within the USA. The CPC was fairly conservative with whom it established fraternal relations, preferring people whom it had known and worked with. Milt Rosen and Mort Scheer, both had been full-time paid functionaries of the U.S. Communist Party (CP) for at least 6 years and were known to the CPC. Others of the founders were the sons or relatives of famous CP personages or had visited China under CP auspices previously. Thus PLM started out with the powerful backing of the largest communist party in the world.

The year 1963 began with the publication by the CPC of "Leninism and Modern Revisionism" and ended with the publication of "Peaceful Coexistence — Two Diametrically Opposed Policies," the sixth general polemic against the Soviet CP. 18 Powerful documents were published by the CPC. These polemics against Khruschev revisionism electrified the world. The CPC defended Marxism-Leninism and put forth the revolutionary concepts of Marx and Lenin that had been buried for at least a decade. Millions of communists all over the world were attracted to revolutionary Marxism and galvanized into action by the CPC polemics. This was especially true in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The pro-China parties the world over experienced rapid growth and great prestige as a result. The PLM, just 1 year old, doubled and redoubled in size.

\*Nor could one expect that the first pamphlet of a fledgling organization would compare with the product of the dictatorship of the proletariat in China.

PLP AT ITS PRIME

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The PLM entered a near vaccuum in the U.S. mass movement. The two "socialist" parties the CP and the SWP (Socialist Workers Party) were conservative and isolated. The trade-union movement was dormant, thoroughly controlled by the ruling class. The banthe-bomb movement had done some good in weakening the cold war mentality, but aside from the Fair Play for Cuba Committee there was no anti-imperialist movement at all. The big movement center was the civil rights movement then approaching its climax. But an organization such as PLM was sorely needed. The air was electric with bold new ideas, the polemics of the CCP, the charismatic influence of Cuba, the bold example of the civil rights movement.

A new generation of revolutionaries was brought up under the idealogical guidance of the CPC and the revolutionary appeal of people like Che Guevarra, Fidel Castro, Patrice Lumumba, Malcolm X, Mohammed Babu, Ho Chi Minh; in the U.S. this included Robert Williams, Fannie Lou Hamer, Bob Dylan and the SNCC people. PLM embraced them all and then in its boldest move organized in quick succession trips to Cuba in defiance of the government travel ban. It was a brilliant stroke. The audacity of the move won the admiration and support of the most left elements in the growing anti-imperialist movement, in the civil rights movement, and among the vocal civil liberties advocates. PLM now had a core of activists with enthusiasm, courage, and imagination, something which the ex-CP functionaries in and by themselves were unable to provide.

The new activists, inspired by the revolutionary polemics of the CPC and the growing mass movement, carved out for PLM and PLP a place in the vanguard of the rising anti-imperialist, anti-racist tide that was inundating the U.S. in the years 1963-1964.

- In January, 1963 PL sent food and money to Hazard, Kentucky starting a serious campaign to aid the embattled coal miners in their protracted violent strike. A PL sponsored trade-union solidarity Committee on January 24 held a support rally of 800. 1 Although in the end better-heeled forces took control of the support campaign, PL's efforts were useful.
- In February, 1963 PL started a new theoretical magazine, the *Marxist-Leninist Quarterly*. While it put out only 4 numbers and never replaced the influential *Monthly Review* it was a contribution to the CPC-led anti-revisionist struggle on the theoretical front.
- In June of 1963 PL organized 59 students to spend a month in Cuba in defiance of the travel ban.<sup>2</sup>
- In that same summer PL organized an election campaign for Bill Epton in Harlem and numerous rent-strike and other community based campaigns in the lower East Side of New York City.

- The September HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee) hearings were disrupted by PLM. The same month PLM physically defeated several attempts of Nazis and Cuban counter-revolutionaries to break-up meetings held by the returnees from Cuba in New York, Washington and San Francisco. In Washington, SNCCled students from Howard were instrumental in PLP's victory. In December PL led hundreds in protests against the New York murder of 2 puerto Rican Youth.
- In April, 1964 PLM drove HUAC out of Buffalo after a broadbased protest movement. It was HUAC's last road-show.
- On May 2nd, 1964 PLM organized the first major anti-Vietnam march in New York City. The idea for the march was presented by Milt Rosen at a broad-based socialist conference at Yale. The May 2nd Movement (M2M) was formed out of the action, and subsequently led a whole series of actions to expose and publicize the growing U.S. aggression in Viet Nam. Two M2M demonstrations in Times Square in August, 1964 were heavily attacked by the police.<sup>3</sup>
- In June, 1964 PLM led a second contingent of students to Cuba. This time 84 students defied the travel ban to spend more than 2 months in Cuba.4
- In Spring, 1964 PL founded a weekly newspaper Challenge which almost immediately began agitating against the vicious police brutality in Harlem. Week after week there were street rallies in Harlem protesting the frame-up of the Harlem 6 and other police atrocities. In July, 1964 one Lt. Gilligan murdered a 15 year old Black youth. Harlem exploded into rebellion and PLM was there in the thick of it passing out "Wanted for Murder, Gilligan the Cop" posters, holding illegal demonstrations, forming a broad-based Harlem Defence Council. PLM leader Bill Epton appeared to be the personal leader of the rebellion. His subsequent arrest and trial for "criminal anarchy" provoked world-wide protests. Bill McAdoo. who organized the Harlem Defence Committee for PLM, in the fall spoke in San Francisco; 500 Black workers came on a moment's notice.<sup>5</sup> Such was the fame of PL and the Harlem Rebellion. A vicious grand jury probe of PL's activities in Harlem resulted in a jail sentence for numerous young PL activists who refused to testify. But in the atmosphere of 1965 the police persecution could only strengthen PLM.

At its founding convention in April, 1965, PLP drew 300 activists around its anti-revisionist (pro-Chinese CP) line, its identification with Mao, Castro, Ho Chi Minh and its militant activity. The new PLP was conscious that it was up and coming. The young revolutionaries had a good mass style; while holding forth for communist

principle they united with diverse groups including the MPI (Puerto Rican Independence Movement, now the Puerto Rican Socialist Party), the National Guardian, the Freedom Now Party, Berkeley activists like Jerry Rubin and others. PL brought its militancy and its Marxist-Leninist line into movements it built around mass issues like "End Police Brutality," "Freedom to Travel to Cuba," "No Rent for Rats," and "U.S. Get Out of Vietnam." PLP openly proclaimed and fought for its communist beliefs but pitched in and fought around reform issues of almost any character. It was a formula for growth and influence.

A constitution for the new Party was approved by the convention. It was based on an article "On The Party" by Milt Rosen published in PL Magazine (V.4, n.1). The democratic aspects of the constitution were based on a firm conviction that the new organization would never fall into the bureaucratic habits of the old CP. The convention mandated a newly elected National Committee (NC) every two years, elected club and regional officers. Also it called for minority reports from NC meetings and regular criticism and self-criticism of the leadership. A twenty-person NC was elected.

The special place the Black Liberation Movement had in the hearts and minds of PLers was recognized by the establishment of a semiautonomous Black Liberation Commission. This commission was to be solely responsible for formulating the slogans and tactics around issues of Black Liberation. The Convention also demanded the Party unconditionally support independence for Puerto Rico.

At the time of the Convention the only two areas of the U.S. that had more than two or three Party members were New York City and San Francisco. The New York-San Francisco axis would always remain at the center of the Party and at no time until 1977 would more than 50% of the Party be outside of the New York, Boston, or San Francisco branches. Since these cities are largely commercial. not industrial, the Party's inability to go beyond these two cities as its major centers presaged its historical failure to gain a toehold within the industrial working class. Nevertheless steps were taken in 1965 to build a more national Party. Two of the most promising young activists, recruited out of the mass movement, not of the old CP, Phil Taylor and Jared Israel, went to Los Angeles and Boston respectively to set up PL branches there. Within a year there was a core of 10 members in each of these two cities.<sup>6</sup> Also Andy Rakochy went to Chicago for the same purpose but with less success and a former-CP leader in Seattle, C. Van Lydergraf, joined PLP with a large group of dissident CPers and he won a sympathyzing group across the border in British Columbia, called the Progressive Workers

Movement, to be a fraternal Canadian group. Besides the Chinese Communist Party, the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front (NLF), the Albanian Party of Labor and the Cuban Communist Leadership, the PLP established mutual fraternal ties with the Liga Socialista, Puertoriquena, the Peoples' Progressive Party of British Guyana, and the new revolutionary government of Zanzibar. *Challenge*, in its June 1st, 1965 issue featured special messages to PLP by leaders of various national liberation movements such as Frelimo in Mozambique, the MPLA in Angola, ZAPU in Zimbabwe, and the Algerian revolutionary leadership.

The activist PLPers and M2Mers plunged into the burgeoning antiwar movement in 1965. PL'ers in New York and San Francisco, and in Boston and Los Angeles were at the heart of the new anti-war committees that were springing up to protest U.S. agression in Vietnam. PLP introduced the then radical slogan "U.S. Get Out of Vietnam"\* and around this slogan organized a firm anti-imperialist Left within the generally pacifist or CP-dominated anti-war committees. Anti-imperialist contingents led by PLP participated in the April, 1965 SDS march on Washington, the Anti-war marches on the Oakland Army Base in the fall of 1965, the New York Fifth Avenue March in November 1965 and scores of militant actions like stopping the troop trains, campus anti-draft rallies, donating blood to the NLF, setting up the "free university" movement. Members of PLP spoke as open communists at the Vietnam Day Teach-In at Berkeley, the Teach-In at City College of New York, and elsewhere.

The anti-war phenomenon was immensely liberating after the 20 years of cold war. The SDS march on Washington, which had speakers ranging from a liberal Senator to SNCC's Bob Moses, was brought to its feet by Phil Ochs' devastating song "I'm a Liberal" which shattered so many cold war myths. The early Vietnam teach-ins were of this character. Liberals from the establishment trying to keep the protests mild and patriotic found themselves on the same platform with those who proclaimed solidarity with the NLF. The 1966 UCLA teach-in, which had heard a range of speakers from conservative to radical liberal was electrified when PLP's Bill MacAdoo bitterly denounced the white liberal mentality, then he openly called for the U.S. Army to mutiny: "Turn your guns on the Generals," he said to the shocked audience. "Treason at UCLA Teachin," screamed the headlines the following day. Yet rally after rally

the cold war myths were smashed, the liberals were denounced, and hundreds of thousands of students became radicals and suddenly open to revolutionary thought. Demonstrations such as the one in Berkeley to stop the troop trains brought the militancy of the civil rights movement into this cauldron of the anti-war movement, where old myths were being shattered and revolutionary thought was becoming a respectable trend.

Through it all PLP urged the anti-war Movement to rely on the working class. This was a specific contribution of Milt Rosen who as early as 1964 wrote a key article, "U.S. Workers, Force for Revolution." In the summer of 1965 Rosen wrote a three-part series for Challenge, which while hailing the NLF and the U.S. Peace Movement pointed out the necessity of basing the anti-war movement squarely on the working class. In this task Rosen had to defeat deep ingrained anti-working class prejudices among many of the young PLP activists. Rosen helped educate a generation of U.S. revolutionaries on the necessity of class-based politics.

Nevertheless when it came to analyzing international events from a communist perspective Rosen was often at sea. In this period Rosen's inability to understand even the rudiments of how imperialism functioned was not very significant because the PLP followed the lead of the Chinese Communist Party, who understood these matters better. In October 19, 1965 Rosen wrote an article for Challenge on the two-week old fascist coup in Indonesia, directed by U.S. imperialism. In his article Rosen failed to realize how U.S. imperialism had controlled the Indonesian state structure all along through the U.S. financed fascist Army, and how President Sukarno, whom Rosen hailed as a "Left" force and whose writings had been reprinted in PL magazine, was never anything but a figurehead for the U.S. imperialist-controlled fascist ruling class of Indonesia.\* Rosen's inability to analyze world events at times led him to make rash and subjective predictions such as the one in this article in 1965: "Sukarno re-affirmed Indonesia's solid support to revolution and anti-imperialist positions in Asia. . . It would appear that the coup has fallen far short of its mark. Sukarno has returned to Jakarta. (Actually he was under Army arrest.) The communists are participating in the parliament, while the other party leaders are organizing against the counter-revolution."

Although it is too early to fully predict the immediate outcome, it is safe to say that in the near future millions of progressive Indo-

<sup>\*</sup>The CP slogan was "Stop the Bombing — Negotiate," this implied the U.S. imperialists had a right to be in Vietnam and was a pacifist, Plague-on-both-your houses slogan and PL was right to oppose it.

<sup>\*</sup>In hailing Sukarno PLP was following the CPC which beat the record in singing the praises of "Bung Karno."

**CHAPTER 2** 

nesians will rally to destroy once and for all U.S. intrigue in alliance with local fascists." (The fascist coup killed 500,000 and thoroughly destroyed the Communist Party.)

PL's penchant for wildly subjective predictions of the future were to cause PLP no end of grief in the Vietnam anti-war movement later on.

Yet this weakness was undetected in the heady anti-war atmosphere of 1966. PLP and M2M led or participated in all manner of protests, demonstrations and actions against the war in Vietnam. PL's anti-war activity assumed an almost daily character. PL was involved in massive marches involving hundreds of thousands in New York, San Francisco, Washington and Los Angeles; smaller marches in places like New Orleans and Newark, protest meetings in such parts of Middle America as Bellingham, Washington; Las Vegas, Nevada; Orange County, California, and scores of other places, antiwar election campaigns in 4 districts of New York and New Jersey, campus anti-war demonstrations at CCNY, UCLA, Harvard, San Francisco State, Berkeley, U of Chicago, Brooklyn College, Roosevelt University (Chicago), Los Angeles City College and Columbia. Most significantly PL tried to take the anti-war movement to the working class with anti-war rallies in New York's garment district, marches in Harlem and anti-war committees in at least two New York Unions. When PLP (along with some independent forces like Jerry Rubin) was singled out by HUAC in August, 1966, for being the communists responsible for the anti-war movement, it was HUAC, not PLP that was destroyed. PLP brought 800 people for 3 days of the sharpest struggle that Capital Hill had seen in 30 years. PL members shocked the inquisitors when they openly proclaimed their communist beliefs and then went on into long sharp detailed explanations, which didn't spare the HUAC Congressmen being called every name in the book. There were scores of arrests but each arrest was more costly politically to HUAC than to PLP. The resulting final defeat of HUAC (they never had a public hearing again) was brilliantly organized by PLP inside and outside the hearing room.

# THE RETREAT FROM THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT 1967-1968

On June 10, 1966 the PLP NC held a discussion on the Viet Nam War, then close to the height of the escalation. A report to the NC directed the NC's attention to what had now clearly become the main contradiction in the U.S. The report discussed the possibility that the Vietnamese would accept the then proferred negotiations with U.S. imperialism but dismissed the possibility as unlikely — "confident" that the Vietnamese people would continue to "carry the banner of world revolution." The report also claimed that the war in Vietnam would "inevitably" escalate into a war with China and lead to the defeat of U.S. imperialism; thus the war in Viet Nam led to the proposition that "imperialism is going to be destroyed" as a result of the Vietnam war.<sup>8</sup> This last proposition was a continuation of the underestimation of the power of U.S. imperialism that had always been a problem for PL; it was the same ideological weakness that led Milt Rosen in the above-quoted article on Indonesia to completely mis-estimate the fascist coup there.

An argument broke out on this question with several members pointing out that things don't necessarily move in such an inexorable direction and that U.S. imperialism had considerable maneuverability left despite their grave military losses in Vietnam. (What PL members never understood, because of lack of theoretical training, was Lenin's dictum that finance capital not military might determines the strength of imperialism and that U.S. imperialism's strength and maneuverability derived from its hegemony in the financial sphere.) Milt Rosen threw his weight mainly behind the report but tried to gloss over the differences. However, a vote was demanded, and by 17-2 with 3 abstentions the report was accepted. 9 and PLP took the first step (undiscernable at the time) on the retreat from the anti-war movement. The report, with its thesis that the war in Vietnam would inexorably lead to the destruction of U.S. imperialism (but with the discussion on whether or not the Vietnamese would negotiate or not deleted) was published in PL magazine V.5 n.5 (Oct-Nov 1966). "The defeat of U.S. imperialism in Vietnam can be the STALINGRAD of U.S. imperialism. It will be that defeat that will push the U.S. into its last moments," the article declared confidently, 10

Late in 1965 the Chinese Communist Party had published an

article called "Refutation of the New Leaders of the CPSU on 'United Action'." This was circulated in pamphlet form during 1966 in the United States. In the articles the CPC declared that the unity of action with the Soviet revisionist ruling clique was impermissable for genuine Marxist-Leninists. This was because the Soviet leaders were in real unity with the U.S. imperialists, "the main enemy of the people of the world," in order to divide up the world into two spheres of influence and to jointly suppress revolutions and national liberation struggles around the world. The article said Soviet "aid" to Vietnam was a sham and given with "ulterior motives" because "it is far from comensurate with the strength of the Soviet Union." The small amount of aid given was used to "hoodwink the people at home and abroad, to keep the situation in Viet Nam under their control, to gain a say on the Viet Nam question and to strike a bargain with U.S. imperialism on it."11 The article called on revolutionaries the world over to draw a clear line of demarcation between themselves and the revisionists. The cultural revolution which broke out in China about this time and reached an intense fury by late 1966 hammered home this last thesis even more stridently, as the revisionist pro-Soviet elements were dragged out of the leadership of the CPC itself.

This Chinese line had a profound effect within the PLP and led to the publication of the document, "Road to Revolution II" in December, 1966. Whether the CPC intended to criticize the Vietnamese Party for accepting the "Soviet aid" was never made clear, but it could easily be read into their article and certainly read into the actions of some Red Guard formations in China at that time. At any rate PLP was quick to interpret the Chinese article as at least implied criticism of the Vietnamese leadership. Now since just 4 months previously the PLP NC had decided that the Vietnamese would never surrender and U.S. imperialism would inexorably crumble as a result of the war, the implication that Soviet "aid" would cause something less than this to happen led the PL leadership to assume betrayal by the Vietnamese fighters. Perhaps the Vietnamese were not going to create the conditions for a U.S. revolution after all. If Vietnam weren't to be the "Stalingrad" of U.S. imperialism the fault would lie with the Vietnamese, according to the new thinking in PLP. Thus PLP expected too much from the Vietnam war due to the Party's underestimation of U.S. imperialism's strength and then blamed the Vietnamese. Thus a theoretical weakness (inability to understand the mechanism of U.S. imperialism's strength) combined with an implied criticism by the CPC to move PL to turn on their Vietnamese "comrades" of four months ago

and to take a disastrous course in the anti-war movement. The document "Road to Revolution II" indicated PLP's new thinking on the Vietnam question for the first time.

The document "Road to Revolution II" began with a sharp criticism of the CPUSA, something that had been missing from "Road to Revolution." It was an excellent critique of how the U.S. CP had had abandoned Marxism. The document then proceeded to show that the Soviet Union had already restored capitalism, the previous formulation had been "is restoring capitalism." Since the CPC had already published some profound material on this, particularly in Mao's famous pamphlet "On Khruschev's Phoney Communism" (1964), PL was on safe grounds here, even if the evidence given in this particular document was only superficial and circumstantial. But since PL based its evidence on clippings from the New York Times, they were unable to come to grips with the fundamental question of capitalist restoration. That is the question of state power. That is why the question "is restoring" vs. "has been restored" was meaningless. If the capitalist elements had seized state power, as was the case in the USSR, the society was then automatically characterized by capitalism, because the state machine would be used for restoration. The complete reversal which is implied when bourgeois elements seize control of a socialist state was never profoundly understood by PLP. This second serious theoretical weakness, while causing no harm to "Road to Revolution II," led the PL leadership to missestimate Soviet imperialism in 1974. (See below.) At this time however, 4 NC members, all older ex-CP functionaries, took their stand on "is restoring" vs. "has already been restored" and bitterly fought Milt Rosen and the majority of the NC. Two of them, Lee Coe of San Francisco and Van Lydergraf of Seattle quit PLP over this question taking a few S.F. members and the whole Seattle organization, as well as the "fraternal" Progressive Workers Movement of Canada, with them. 12 The question of the Soviet Union had a tremendous emotional pull on old CP'ers and many of them couldn't make the step to call the USSR "capitalists." It is to Rosen's credit that he alone of the old ex-CP'ers did not hesitate to call the USSR "capitalist." The splittees tried to continue to bridge the unbridgable; the Chinese and Soviet positions were by now irreconcilable. Their position was untenable and they shortly afterwards dropped out of serious politics.

When it came to the question of Viet Nam "Road to Revolution II" tried to be circumspect:

12

"We recognize that the comrades in Vietnam are on the horns of a serious and complex dilemma. Taking "aid" from the revisionists may bring some momentary help in their battle. And it may give the appearance of unity. But the imperialists are not fooled.

"To the extent that people are confused about the real nature of revisionism, revisionism is perpetuated. The cleverer tactics of the Soviet leaders have tended to lull and confuse many honest people. After all, they say, 'whatever way you cut the cake, the Soviet Union is helping the Vietnamese'."

. . .

"But the essence is the same. You can't take increasing 'aid' from the revisionists and fight revisionism at the same time. That is the nub of it.

"The struggle against revisionism and for unity around Marxist-Leninist principles is the responsibility of all true revolutionaries.

"In the final analysis, the Vietnamese comrades may reject Soviet 'aid'. They may characterize Soviet 'aid' and its so-called 'unity' for what it is. This would be a sharp blow to revisionism. It would demonstrate that the road to victory is reliance on the strength of the masses coupled with genuine aid from really revolutionary forces."

(PL V.5, No. 6, p. 22-23)

To PLP the mere acceptance of Soviet "aid" was proof positive that the Vietnamese were renegades. Of course Soviet "aid" was given with the purpose of causing a betrayal, as the CCP had pointed out, but mere acceptance of the "aid" in question does not connote betrayal unless the recipient bows to unprincipled conditions. The history of the International Communist Movement is replete with instances where revolutionaries took aid from a counter-revolutionary source but did not deviate from the revolutionary path because of it. Lenin took "aid" from the German general staff when they offered to transport him to Russia in 1917. The Bolsheviks took U.S. "aid" during the famine of 1921 and accepted U.S., British and German investments in the twenties. Stalin took "aid" from the allied imperialists during World War II. Why then were the Vietnamese forbidden to take Soviet "aid"? Even the CCP, the sworn enemies of the Soviet leadership never argued thus, PLP's position was childishly ultra-leftist, and in fact hypocritical because even PLP was known to take donations from bourgois sources without these donations polluting its ultra-left revolutionary principles.

The problem was that even at this early stage PLP was unable to analyze dialectically a political problem. The early analysis that Vietnam was to be the "Stalingrad" of U.S. imperialism was clearly not true. But instead of studying the mechanism of imperialism.

particularly the role of finance capital, in order to see why this is so, the PL leadership caught on to the Vietnamese accepting "aid" from the USSR, made a mountain out of a molehill, came up with a new analysis which lay the blame for the survival of U.S. imperialism on the Vietnamese instead of on the faulty PL analysis of U.S. imperialism. "Out of the frying pan into the fire." But this new analysis only landed PLP into the swamp, and instead of turning back, PL obstinately pushed deeper and deeper into the swamp until they had made the aid question and later the negotiations questions primary rather than the question of U.S. aggression in Vietnam. When PL's attacks on the Vietnamese freedom fighters became more strident than their attacks on the U.S. imperialist aggressors, PLP ceased to be part of the anti-war movement and slipped into social-patriotism.

In "Road to Revolution II" the PLP leadership had tried mightily to suppress their feelings about the Vietnamese "betrayal" and to give the Vietnamese leaders the benefit of their rapidly increasing doubts. But the National Steering Committee\* (NSC)'s patience with the Vietnamese wore thin in short order. Milt Rosen declared in a letter to the California District Committee of PL on January 25, 1967 that "Of late, a number of important developments have occurred which have unfortunately shown the wisdom of the NC statement." He referred to the visit of a ruling class journalist, Harrison Salisbury, to Hanoi. 13 Mort Scheer who had opposed "Road to Revolution II" now reversed himself in the face of these startling "developments" and declared that the document was "completely on the beam."

Armed with this new certainty in their "wisdom" the PLP NC escalated the verbal war with Hanoi in step to Johnson's escalation of the real war with Vietnam:

"The Vietnamese people would be better off without Soviet 'aid.' The Vietnamese people need Salisbury and his ilk in their country-like they need a hole in the head. . . They (the revisionists) simply used the Vietnamese to advance their collusion with imperialism."

Challenge, February 1967

\*The NSC was the collective responsible for the line as it developed in Challenge, PL magazine and the internal bulletins. The NSC consisted of Milt Rosen, Wally Linder and two other New York leaders. In the first period (to 1970) Bill Epton and Jeff Gordon rounded out the NSC; in the second period (1971-1975) it was Bob Leonhardt and Janet Foley. In practice, however, Rosen invited whomever he wanted to the NSC meetings, which were fairly informal.

"To focus on the bombing, as the revisionist and imperialist enemies of the Vietnamese people do, is to surrender to the aggression. It is to say, "All right, I'll grant you the right to intervene in my country if you stop bombing me." In other words the revisionists are demanding the Vietnamese surrender in negotiations what the imperialists have not been able to win on the battlefield.

"And they justify this position to good-hearted people everywhere by an unimaginably cynical 'concern' for the sufferings of their 'friends' the 'poor Vietnamese.' What unspeakable treachery!

"Of course the Vietnamese, who are in a difficult position, lend themselves to this by continuing to accept Soviet 'aid.' This gives respectability to every faker who parrots the Kosygin-Brezhnev line. In fact, it is the only thing that allows Kosygin and Brezhnev to play their game.

"That this slogan 'Stop the bombing and negotiate' is the path of surrender to U.S. imperialism was proven beyond doubt this last month. (What can the north offer in negotiations except undermining the struggle in the south?) But after the north Vietnamese made clear that they were ready to negotiate, and even deemphasized the importance of their famous four points as their response to Johnson's bombing pause, Johnson answered them by saying, 'Fine, but also first stop fighting.' And from London Kosygin pressured Hanoi, 'Show more 'good faith' — stop helping the south.'...

"The lesson is clear: you can't play the revisionists' game without giving in to imperialism. 'Negotiations' is the cry of the wolf in sheep's clothing."

Challenge, March 1967

"The April 15th anti-war mobilization is being organized around the false issues of 'stop the bombing and negotiate.' This maneuver is a world-wide tactic growing out of the collusion between Washington and Moscow — the new anti-revolutionary axis. Washington and Moscow want to betray and crush the revolution in Vietnam now. The demonstrations and their demands are being organized against the real sentiments of militant anti-war forces.

"This entire shameful development has gotten a big boost, recently, by the backsliding of leaders in Hanoi. Under the pounding influence of the Soviet leaders, Hanoi has retreated from its original and correct four-point program, whose essential point is that there is nothing to confer about until the U.S. invaders get out. The Johnson administration, encouraged by back-tracking, the Johnson gang has increased bombings of Vietnam and is pouring in more firepower in a greater effort to compel the Hanoi leaders to surrender. Here is a prime object lesson: Retreat in the face of imperialism only encourages its appetite for more. The Guam conference was organized to step up the war and plan the invasion of north Vietnam if they will not surrender/negotiate.

"In a move which can only weaken and confuse the anti-war movement around the world, and undermine their own position, Vietnamese leaders are hailing RFK and Co."

Challenge, April 1967

"The Soviets are relying on some weak elements in Vietnam to help pull off the big deal. . . Within our country negotiations would confuse and weaken the growing anti-imperialist movement. The revisionists and imperialists would be strengthened by the obvious implication that if there are negotiations this would be what the Vietnamese leaders favor. This would be extremely difficult for revolutionary and anti-imperialist forces to challenge."

PL, Nov-Dec 1967

The essence of all this is that the Vietnamese betrayed PLP's position in the anti-war movement by negotiating with U.S. imperialism and not making Vietnam the "Stalingrad" of U.S. imperialism. What the Vietnamese communists betrayed was the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat, but they never betrayed the struggle for independence and national liberation. This is an important distinction if a serious Marxist-Leninist critique of the Vietnam Workers Party were to be made. But PL's criticism was way off. The Vietnamese held fast to their goals of independence, self-determination and reunification through 21 years of war, negotiations and more war and they eventually accomplished these goals. The Vietnam war was the most serious defeat U.S. imperialism ever suffered. Neither Soviet "aid" nor negotiations affected at all the outcome of their struggle: it was not, however, possible in Vietnam alone to destroy U.S. imperialism altogether, a far stronger beast than PL imagined.

The Vietnam question was a complex one for revolutionaries in the U.S. to grasp and beyond PLP's power to deal with. On the one hand it was increasingly obvious that the Vietnamese Workers Party had abandoned the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. They neither called for its establishment in the South then nor in the future. They never referred to their own state in the North as the dictatorship of the proletariat nor gave any indication that the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" would at some point in the future be transformed into a dictatorship of the proletariat. This was a significant departure from Marxism-Leninism. Marx had stated that the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat is what distinguishes his scientific socialism from the bourgeois theories of class struggle (letter to Wedemeyer, March 5, 1852). Lenin called the concept the "touchstone" between Marxism and Revisionism. (State and Revolution). In addition the Vietnamese Party performed un-

necessary service to Soviet revisionists by lending them credence. At a time when the CCP and the Albanian Party of Labor had exposed the Soviet regime before the revolutionaries of the world to withering and many-sided criticism, the Vietnamese muddied the waters (if not engaged in a purposeful cover-up) by hailing the Soviet leaders as "communists" and "revolutionaries" and invariably and repeatedly referred to the imperialist USSR as "socialist." They even went so far as to congratulate the Soviet imperialists on their brutal 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Thus the Vietnamese were outside the revolutionary Marxist-Leninist camp, headed by the CCP. On the other hand they were leading a national liberation war against U.S. imperialism. It was a successful people's war, a progressive war. The Vietnamese leadership was uncompromising in their aims and goals. They fought for 30 years against the most powerful imperialist power in the world and in the end dealt the U.S. government the most thorough and ignominious defeat it had suffered in its 200 year history. The goal of liberating Vietnam and wiping out the U.S. occupation forces and local puppets was always in the forefront of Vietnamese strategy, even when they negotiated, even when they signed the Geneva agreements. Their persistance and implacable determination to liberate their nation from imperialism has few parallels in history.

What then were the duties of the U.S. revolutionary communist party in regards to the Vietnam question, which was the main contradiction in the U.S. at the time. The primary duty was to support wholeheartedly, unreservedly in words and deeds the war of national liberation in Vietnam. The secondary duty was to expose Vietnamese deviations from Marxism-Leninism.

Communists are duty-bound in general to support national liberation struggles of oppressed people even if they do not lead to socialism. This is because: (1) History has shown that the victory of the national liberation movement leads to an important dramatic improvement in the living conditions of the working people. All reports from Vietnam today show a tremendous improvement in the material conditions and moral environment compared with the period of U.S. occupation. To refuse to recognize the raft of important reforms national liberation makes in the lives of the people is to adopt an anarchist, non-materialist point of view. (2) The victory of the national liberation war occurs at the expense of imperialism and deals a body blow to the oppressor. The Vietnam war seriously weakened U.S. imperialism, militarily and financially. From a weakened U.S. imperialism it is easier to wrest further gains (It was no coincidence that the biggest gains Black people made in the U.S.

was during the Vietnam War,) and to eventually defeat altogether. To refuse to support the national liberation war means *objectively* to support imperialism and the racism of the oppressor nation as the lesser evils compared with revisionism and nationalism.

In the particular situation of the time there was the contradiction of the U.S. War of Agression Against Vietnam and all the suffering this imposed on the Vietnamese and U.S. working classes. The resolving of this contradiction in favor of the Vietnamese would immensely weaken U.S. imperialism thus making more gains possible to the U.S. working class and would cause a big improvement in the living conditions of the Vietnamese workers. The contradiction, in which the Vietnamese aided Soviet revisionism was clearly secondary. Therefore the duty of U.S. revolutionaries was to concentrate every effort to defeat U.S. imperialism and support the People's War in Vietnam and only secondarily and in this context to criticize Vietnamese "revisionism." PLP took the opposite approach, but worse for until June, 1968 (PL V.6, n.4) PLP never even noticed Vietnamese "revisionism" with regards to the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat nor with regards to covering for Soviet revisionism. Even in that editorial Vietnamese "revisionism" was brought in as an afterthought to the main theme of "Ugly Negotiations." The PLP editorials for 18 months had previously focused instead on the "betrayal" (that the Vietnamese did not destroy U.S. imperialism for them,) or had lambasted them for accepting Soviet "aid" or had complained that the negotiations weakened PLP's hand in the antiwar movement. Thus PLP put criticizing the Vietnamese (not even correct criticism, in the main) as its number one priority instead of working for the defeat of U.S. imperialism and victory for the war of national liberation.

With this line it is not surprising that PLP left the anti-war committees. This was a real crime because they were just then becoming mass in character. The April, 1967 demonstrations in San Francisco and New York involved 500,000. It is true that the actions of the Vietnamese leaders tended to strengthen the hand of CP, SWP,\* and liberal-pacifist leaderships of the anti-war committees, but the left forces and anti-imperialist forces were growing too. More and more people in the anti-war movement were adopting an anti-imperialist outlook. This was in part due to PL's good work, in larger part due to PL's good work, in larger part due to the effects of the Chinese polemics against revisionism and in major part due to the deeds of the heroic NLF in Vietnam. At any rate to walk out on the anti-war

<sup>\*</sup>SWP, the leading social democratic Trotskyite group.

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committees was to condemn them to be permanently led by antiworking class, non-revolutionary forces; it was to condemn a movement involving 1,000,000 to forever have bad leadership. PLP did not even contest these forces for leadership in the anti-war committees. They just walked out. Suppose the Bolsheviks had walked out of the Soviets in early 1917 when they were under Menshevik-SR leadership. As we know the Bolsheviks stayed and struggled, eventually won a majority in the Soviets, and then organized the Soviets to seize power. But PLP, faced with an analogous situation *just walked out*.

In this the PLP leadership demonstrated its paralyzing fear of revisionism. The revisionists were so "powerful" that PLP had to run as far away from them as possible even if it meant abandoning a million-strong movement — a movement PL helped to build. Instead of fighting the revisionists PL ran away from them.

In this walk-away from the mass movement PLP demonstrated a hopelessly sectarian approach that eventually became self-destructive. Better a "glorious" isolation than lend PL's "hallowed" name to a revisionist-dominated committee. How Lenin scorned such infantile psuedo-left tactics in his work *Left-Wing Communism!* When the Chinese C.P. called for drawing a clear line of distinction between Marxist-Leninists and revisionists they meant a battle line, a line based on struggle. The anti-war committees that PLP abandoned were excellent forums for such a struggle, for drawing such a line. But PLP *just walked out.* 

Moreover, they walked out quietly. There was no sharp struggle followed by a split with the bad leaders that might have taken the anti-imperialist elements into at least a *political* walk-out. No, in the course of the spring of 1967 PL members and leaders of the various anti-war committees just stopped showing up to meetings, leaving the anti-imperialist members, who had previously looked to PL for leadership, under the leadership of the SWP (who now came to play the role of "Left" opposition.) 15 In PLP's eyes the anti-war committees were equivalent to Soviet revisionists and PLP had to break with them, but PLP in 1967 still felt itself part of the anti-war movement.

Self-isolated from the mainstream of the movement PLP did not at this time (1967) abandon the anti-war movement altogether. PLP retreated from the anti-war movement in a 2 year process and at this point PLP staked out a claim to lead the "independent left" forces, the majority of the anti-imperialist forces, since unity with these forces did not imply unity with pro-Soviet revisionists. The movement was so large at this time that there were large forces out-

side the anti-war committees (the mobe or mobilization as they came to be called) that held for a left "U.S. Get Out Now" position as opposed to the official mobe slogan of "Stop the Bombing, and Negotiate." These left organizations included War Resisters League, Resistance Committees, Vietnam Day Committees on West Coast campuses, the Black Panther Party, a number of Black organizations, some independent electoral campaigns, and most significantly SDS, which PLP had joined in force in the spring of 1966 and which since the August, 1966 convention was set on an anti-imperialist course. PLP now built united front anti-war action with these left forces around the slogan "U.S. Get Out of Vietnam Now" and ignored the far larger mobe. But in 1967 PLP still vigorously pursued anti-war actions which were of serious and growing significance.

- In April PLP in New York formed a Black United Action Front which marched 1500 people through Harlem to then join with the main march led by the mobe. In this action PLP united with a diverse range of forces including Stokeley Carmichel, CORE, the Mau Mau Society and leading personages in the militant wing of the Black Liberation Movement.\* 16
- On June 23, 1967 President Johnson came to Century City, Los Angeles to speak. The mobe got permission to march past his hotel without stopping. PLP, SDS, the War Resisters' League and other left forces determined to stop in front of the hotel. Leadership of the march of 20,000 was wrested from the hands of the mobe's marshalls by the PL-led militants. A 4 hour bloody battle ensued after the police attacked the march, with injuries on both sides and a partial victory for the anti-war movement because LBJ never dared speak in public again. 18
- PLP organized a "Vietnam work-in" in the summer of 1967 sending students into factories to try to mobilize workers to oppose the war. It had little success and was a reaction to the MOBE summer project directed toward the community which reached many more people.
- In October a PL and SDS attempt to stop a Navy recruiter at Brooklyn College led to an even broader United Front after PL student leader, Jeff Gordon, was arrested. The campus was completely shut down in a 3-day strike.
- Beginning in the late spring PL anti-draft action grew throughout the summer in New York, Boston, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.
  Black Anti-draft Unions were formed in New York and Los

<sup>\*</sup>The Mobe's main speaker was Martin Luther King, who was embarassed when most Black marchers came under the leadership of anti-Mobe forces.

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Angeles by PLP and induction centers disrupted on numerous occasions in Oakland, Los Angeles and New York.

The growing anti-draft militancy culminated in "Stop the Draft Week" in Oakland, October 17-20. The night before, 15,000 students gathered at UC Berkeley, and early in the morning 3,500 gathered at the Oakland induction center determined to prevent any more inductions into the Army. An all out street battle followed against 2,000 cops that day and again on October 20. The demonstrators used mobile tactics and fought back physically against the cops. The induction center was shut down for a total of 7 hours, but more importantly the Bay Area anti-war movement felt its power in a close quarters battle with the police lasting several days. <sup>19</sup>

A broad-base coalition of forces to the left of the mobe organized the action. PLP participated in all levels. Afterwards Milt Rosen flew to the Bay Area from New York to pointedly tell the Bay Area Party leadership that in New York the Party did not participate in "Stop the Draft week;" he questioned the wisdom of having participated in the Oakland action. PLP was now preparing in the late fall of 1967 to isolate itself from even the anti-imperialist wing of the anti-war movement.

In November Rosen wrote a major article for Challenge which basically attacked the actions at Oakland and other places as "putchist." 21 The resistance tactics could be distorted into an anarchist, anti-working class strategy. This was more obvious at a November 14 New York demonstration, or at the October 21st Pentagon March led by the pacifists. It was good for Rosen to criticize potential anarchist tendencies and to call for unity with the working class. But the way to change bad or potentially bad leadership is to fight from within the anti-war movement as PL did in Oakland.\* That's one reason why the Oakland actions were on the whole less anarchistic and more pro-working class than the New York action, from which PLP largely abstained. Rosen's editorial was by and large a call to abstain from further anti-war actions. The attacks on the practical and ideological leaders of the anti-imperialist wing of the anti-war movement for being anti-working class and prone to violent anarchist tactics now matched in stridency the attacks on the Mobe and PL members were given no further encouragement to help lead anti-war actions.

In the same period it became clear that negotiations between the U.S. and Vietnam were becoming inevitable and PLP escalated its

The Berkeley PLP Club took strong exception to Rosen's article and wrote a protest letter that Rosen never answered.

verbal abuse of the Vietnamese leaders to a fever pitch.

"Incorporated in the babble over the semantics of 'could' to 'will' in the latest north Vietnamese peace offer is the ominous fact that this does represent a further retreat..."

PL, March-April 1968

The "retreating" Vietnamese, shortly after this was written, launched the brilliant Tet Offensive that handed U.S. imperialism its worst military defeat ever. This only took PL aback temporarily. When they gained their bearings PLP made the claim that Tet was all just a show for negotiations.

"U.S. imperialism with the cooperation of the Soviet Union and the North Vietnamese leaders, will use negotiations to achieve its goal of keeping a troop concentration based in Vietnam."

Challenge, April 1968

"Unfortunately the north Vietnamese and many Americans are still duped by bourgeois elections."

Challenge, August 1968 (Note how all North Vietnamese but only 'many' Americans are 'duped.')

Finally the PL National Office issued a leaflet mentioning "the Washington-Moscow-Hanoi anti-revolutionary axis." Thus from comradely criticism in December 1966 PLP was comparing the Vietnamese to the fascist Axis powers 18 months later. With the PL line "developed" to this point it was natural to see why the NSC attacked "Stop the Draft Week." Why risk your cadre in so potentially dangerous and violent a movement when heads or tails you support the "axis"? Thus further participation in the anti-war movement became close to impossible. Moreover, in 1967-8 PL members were told by the leadership that the war was about to end in a matter of months anyway so we might as well get the jump on the revisionists and get involved in other issues. The retreat ended; PLP left the anti-war movement behind and moved on the other things.

Meanwhile in late 1968 there were still 600,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam dying at the rate of 500 per week, killing thousands of Vietnamese every week; big pitched battles were being fought up and down the country. Anti-war demonstrations involved tens of millions world-wide. In the U.S. the election of 1968 galvanized millions to anti-war activity on at least some level, but PLP was isolated from all this. Four years previous PLP had launched the

anti-war movement, now it abandoned it altogether. The "vanguard" Party of the working class totally abandoned the biggest mass movement in thirty years. Contrast this with Lenin:

"In our time only a party that will **organize** really **nationwide** exposures can become the vanguard of the revolutionary forces. . . the all-round political agitation will be conducted by a party which unites into one inseperable whole the assault on the government in the name of the entire people. . . "

Lenin, What is to Be Done

# CHAPTER 3

## RETREAT FROM THE BLACK LIBERATION MOVEMENT

There has always been a militant attack against racism by Black people. A red thread of resistance runs from Nat Turner through the Reconstruction period to W.E.B. DuBois' NAACP of 1906. The first phase of the contemporary Black Liberation Movement (BLM), preceeded PL. But PLM came into being during the height of the second phase, the period of non-violent direct action mainly in the South and Border States that began with Martin Luther King's Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott, continued with the CORE-led Freedom rides, the SNCC-led\* sit-in movement and culminated in the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer and 1965 Selma, Alabama marches. PLM took no direct participation in these events. This was a significant error because in 1963-1965 the South was the focus of the U.S. class struggle and true revolutionaries should have participated in the Southern Black Liberation Movement. But PL instead tried from afar to push the BLM into a third phase, violent direct action. Thus PLM from its inception kept up a merciless barrage of criticism against Martin Luther King, the main apostle of non-violence. However toward the younger more-militant forces in the BLM particularly SNCC and certain CORE chapters PL took a more friendly stance. SNCC was critical of the non-violent King leadership, but correctly united with him during the mass campaigns like the 1963 March on Washington, the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer and the 1965 Selma demonstrations. In the heyday of this phase of the movement (1961-1965) PL was far too small to be considered as a useful ally for SNCC, which had at one point 700 full-time cadre, more than 90% Black and 50% working class, and directly led more than 150,000 Black people in SNCC chapters or in allied organizations, like the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. PL, on its part, was turned off by SNCC's official non-violent policy. (In practice, however, especially in Mississippi SNCC cadre were involved in armed self-defence; the PL leadership was largely ignorant of what was really going on in the South.) PL's members were tied to New York City and either too ignorant of what was going on or too arrogant towards the Southern struggle to participate in the struggle as rank and file SNCC cadre.

<sup>\*</sup>Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee

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Had PLM organized to participate in the historic SNCC-led battles in Alabama and Mississippi the way they organized for the trips to Cuba, when the BLM entered its third violent phase, SNCC might have played a leading role as an anti-imperialist ally of PLP. Epton and other Black cadre of PL did visit and meet with the huge SNCC chapter in Howard University. John Harris was chairman of that chapter in 1963-64 and there was a growing trend at Howard to study Marxism-Leninism and learn from the example of the Cuban revolution. Most of these forces went to Mississippi in 1964, where they were heavily radicalized by the extremely sharp struggle, but unfortunately PLP forces did not follow them south. 24 Instead PLP took upon itself the role of highlighting the evidence of growing disenchantment with non-violence among the BLM. A couple of PL correspondents roamed the South, interviewed activists and encouraged the growing manifestations of non-non-violence. Thus when the Robert Williams' group in Monroe, North Carolina or the Deacons for Defense in Louisiana took action for armed self-defense against the Ku Klux Klan, Challenge reporters were soon on the scene with encouragement and publicity efforts. They also reported on the Birmingham Rebellion in 1963, but that is really all PL did to help the Southern BLM.

In July, 1964 the BLM entered the third phase with the Harlem rebellion, followed by rebellions in Brooklyn, New Jersey, Rochester and elsewhere. PLM jumped into the Harlem insurrection without hesitation and with its full forces, as we saw. Agitation to promote armed Black rebellions and to give full support and encouragement for those underway became a major aspect of PL's program. PL members, particularly Bill Epton and Bill McAdoo, showed great courage and some serious ability as mass communist leaders in their participation in and leadership of the Harlem rebellion of 1964. Bill Epton was indicted and convicted of "criminal anarchy" for his role in leading the rebellion. His arrest provoked world-wide protests; statements of support came from Bertrand Russell, Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, the South Vietnamese NLF, as well as from persons or organizations in Sweden, Guyana, New Zealand, Canada, Britain, Puerto Rico, China, France and Ghana. Epton gave an inspiring speech to the court upon his conviction, turning prosecutor himself and placing the judge and the whole capitalist system on trial.<sup>25</sup> Reprinted as a pamphlet "We Accuse" his speech had wide circulation in Harlem, Watts and elsewhere.

In 1965 although there were no PL members yet in Los Angeles, PL cadre came down from San Francisco to report on the 5-day

bloody Watts rebellion, the biggest so far, and Challenge gave full front page coverage and support. The same was true of the Chicago rebellion of 1966. In the summer of 1966 John Harris, who had joined PLP after leaving Mississippi in 1965 and was now leader of the new PLP club in Los Angeles, boldly passed out leaflets "Wanted for murder, Bova the cop" after this animal had cold bloodedly murdered a Black man, Deadwyler, who was driving his pregnant wife to the hospital. This atrocity had inflamed still smoldering Watts and the hysterical establishment arrested not Bova but Harris for "criminal syndicalism," the first such use of this California law since 1934. A mass appearance at subsequent court hearings led to the dismissal of these charges a few years later. 26 In 1966 Harris formed a militant "Black Anti-draft Union" in Watts which combined the militancy of the BLM with that of the anti-war movement, The Watts Anti-Draft Union held a number of militant demonstrations at Army recruiters offices and at High Schools. The connection between the national liberation struggle in Vietnam and the BLM, was clearly drawn. In one action (Oct. 4, 1967) Harris and four others were arrested for "inciting to riot" by the nervous Los Angeles police. But the Black Anti-Draft Union continued and brought some Black Cadre into the Party in Watts. The Black Anti-Draft Union also brought a number of Black militants, including some Panthers to the Century City Demonstration in June, 1967.<sup>27</sup> (See above.) During the September, 1966 San Francisco rebellion PL organized a courageous 75-person picket line of the National Guard Headquarters in the thick of the battle, as well as rendering other support to the rebels. PL's record in 1966 could not have been much better.

If PL had political objections to the SNCC-led non-violent direct actions,\* there were none as far as the rebellions were concerned; these were violent in tactics and generally sparked by working class issues such as police brutality and unemployment. If there were geographical reasons for not participating in the Southern movement these did not apply to the rebellions; these took place in PL's back-yard, the Northern cities. Yet without inner-Party discussion, during the summer of 1967 the PL leadership cooled down its previously heated support for the rebellions just as they were reaching their highpoint.

In July 1967 the biggest Black rebellion yet broke out in Newark,

<sup>\*</sup>These were unjustifiably ultra-left objections to the tactics and petty-bourgeois "revolutionary" nationalist contempt for the democratic demand of integration.

iust a short 30 minute ride from PLP national Headquarters in New York. Geographically there was no more problem participating in this deeper more violent and more protracted rebellion than in the Harlem rebellion of 1964, moreover PL had at least twice as many members in New York in 1967 as in 1964. But this time New York PLP did nothing to aid the rebellion or to give political leadership to it. (In 1963 the top PL leadership went to Birmingham during the rebellion there, but in 1967 they stayed clear of Newark.) The small New Jersey club mobilized less than 10 students for a short picket line one day, after the rebellion had peaked, at the National Guard headquarters but no one from PL tried to enter the battle zone.<sup>28</sup> The contrast between the actions of the New York Party during Harlem in 1964 and Newark in 1967 was striking; it was like the difference between day and night. Since the studied inaction during the Newark rebellion was directly led by the national Party leadership the message could not be lost on the Party as a whole. It was the clearest possible sign indicating a general retreat from the Black Liberation Movement, a retreat from the sharpest battles of the BLM.

The Detroit Rebellion, which involved some white workers, was even bigger and more protracted than Newark and was the highpoint of the rebellions. Some 20,000 regular Army troops, diverted from Vietnam, in addition to the police and National Guard were needed to suppress it. The small Detroit club did even less than the New Jersey club a week or so earlier. New York did not even send a Challenge reporter. There were no support actions at army bases, like Ft. Dix where PL had done some military work. Challenge reports on Detroit and Newark were distinctly low key compared with Harlem (1964), Watts (1965) and Chicago (1966). There was no front-page treatment as had been the case with Harlem (1964). Watts (1965) or Chicago (1966). Instead a short one-column story on Newark was buried on page 4, and a short story on Detroit, written by a professor at Wayne State University, was on page 5. The lukewarmness of the Party's reaction to the rebellions in 1967 was made clear in the type of Challenge reporting. Only two outsiders, white middle class reporters, wrote about the two most momentous rebellions in the U.S. in 90 years. True there was a PL statement giving strong support from afar, although even this verbal support was distinctly lower key than the Challenge statement on Watts two years previous.<sup>29</sup>

Within the Party the "word" was passed down from the top leadership to the members that these rebellions "didn't amount to much" compared with careful day to day base building on-the-job,

that there were "reactionary nationalist" elements involved, that the rebellion played into the hands of Johnson's Poverty Programs, etc. 30

By the Spring of 1968, when extremely sharp rebellions broke out in Pittsburgh and Washington and other cities over the assasination of Martin Luther King, not only did the Party send no aid and organize no support, but *Challenge* spent more time attacking Martin Luther King than hailing the rebellions. This type of editorial policy, however justified given King's historical role, had the effect of discouraging even the most minimal PLP support for the rebellions and to throw cold water on the heroic efforts of the Black masses. For example the *Challenge* of April 1968 said:

"In dozens of other cities around the country we see the same mixture: government mourning for Kind and government mourning for Black people."

This was as close as *Challenge* got to even mentioning the rebellions, widespread rebellions in the aftermath of Kings's assasination. Some 4,000 Army troops were called out in Washington; PLP made no move to protest this but PL by now was not even giving verbal support to the rebels, just brickbats for King.31

The Orangeburg, South Carolina police murder of three protesting Black students likewise evoked scant attention from the PL leadership or Challenge. There were SDS demonstrations on various campuses, but PL forces initiated nothing in protest of this atrocity. During 1967 two of the three Black N.Y. Party leaders, David Douglass and Bill McAdoo, quit in disgust when the Party refused to organize support activities while they were in jail for charges rising out of the Harlem rebellion. (They had organized protests among the Black inmates against prison conditions but were left holding an empty bag when the Party outside gave no serious support.)<sup>32</sup> At the PLP Convention of 1968, on the motion of, Milt Rosen, the Party's Black Liberation Commission, which had been headed by Epton, was stripped of all authority and soon went out of existence. 33 In January, 1969 the Party lost its very popular 2-year old Liberation Book Store in Harlem when the manager, Una Mulzac, was expelled from PLP because she refused to buy PL's retreat from the BLM. Rosen characterized the bookstore as a "nationalist center in Harlem;" he pushed Epton to "struggle" with Mulzac to change the "nationalist character" of it, meaning selling more Challenges and less or no material about the BLM. Mulzac, a well-known Black woman Marxist leader in Harlem was expelled.

She and her co-workers in the bookstore then expelled PLP from the bookstore. PLP had no serious desire to take back the bookstore; the Party lost interest in a Marxist-Leninist Center in Harlem.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, within the NC, criticism of Bill Epton, the only remaining Black Party leader in N.Y. sharply mounted. At the convention the post of Vice-president of the Party, which he had held since 1965, was quietly abolished. All this more and more clearly indicated a strong craving of the Milt Rosen leadership to get out of the Black Liberation Movement at all costs. This finally came to a head shortly after the historic San Francisco State Strike in the fall of 1968.

Spurred forward by the militancy of the ghetto rebellions of 1967-1968, and bringing much of that militancy onto the campus, the San Francisco State Strike erupted on November 6, 1968. Progressive Labor Party cadre played a decisive vanguard role in helping to develop and lead the strike to become the biggest, and most militant, and longest struggle in the history of the U.S. student movement. The anti-racist strikers paralyzed the university and kept it from functioning for three months.

The strike was the continuation of the student movement at State which had been developing since the fall of 1966. This movement had been focused on racism and U.S. imperialist aggression in Vietnam. Two major struggles marked the year prior to the strike: During the fall of 1967, the editor of the Administration-controlled campus paper ran a series of racist articles. When nine members of the BSU went to the Editor's office to protest these racist slurs, a fight broke out which resulted in the nine black students being suspended by President Summerskill. PLP and allied forces in SDS, together with the Black Student Union (BSU), staged a militant demonstration in the Administration building demanding that the racist articles be suspended and the 9 black students reinstated. 35

During the spring of 1968 PLP and SDS continued the anti-racist struggle and linked it to the war. This effort culminated in late May with a sit-in occupation of the Administration building led by SDS, PLP and the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) demanding preferential admissions of minority students, rehiring of a Chicano professor who was being fired and removal of the AFROTC training program. The sit-in lasted 5 days and involved 1,000 students with 25 arrests. Two of the demands were won and another was partially granted. The mass struggle forced President Summerskill's resignation at the end of the sit-in.

The issue of the strike was racism, specifically the racist nature and policies of the university. The main demands were:

- 1.) Preferential admissions for all minority students who apply to the college. Increased financial aid for these students, including dormitory housing if needed.
- 2.) Retention of English instructor George Murray for the 1968-69 academic year. Murray was being fired for a campus rally speech in which he called for "armed self-defense against the racist police forces" after the cops had murdered a 17-year-old BPP member in Oakland.
- 3.) Creation of a School of Ethnic Studies with a Black Studies Department, Chicano Studies Department, Asian Studies, etc. All administrators brought in to deal with these Departments were to be of minority background.
- 4.) Immediate preferential hiring of 50 full-time minority faculty.
- 5.) Firing Helen Bedesom, notoriously racist Director of Financial Aid with a history of harassing and insulting minority students.
- 6.) Giving Nathan Hare, who was in charge of all Black Studies courses, a salary commensurate with other Department chairmen.
- 7.) Once the strike was on, amnesty for the strikers and removal of the police forces from the campus became an added demand.

The demands for preferential admissions, preferential hiring of minority faculty, blocking the racist firing of Murray, and kicking out the racist Bedesom were important anti-racist reforms which were in conflict with the racist policies of the university. Thus the essence of the strike demands was progressive and anti-racist. The demand for preferential admissions was sparked by the blatantly racist admission policies of the university Administration: Over 70% of the students in San Francisco's public schools were Black, Latin or Asian; yet less than 4% of the student body at S.F. State was non-white. The same racist policies prevailed in regard to hiring of faculty: vicious racists like Bedesom were protected and anti-racist faculty like Murray and others were fired.

The PLP club at S.F. State pointed out that the job of all administrators including minority administrators is to carry out policies in the interest of the Board of Trustees and the rest of the ruling class. This was borne out in practice as the half dozen minority administrators at State first tried to prevent the strike and then tried to sabotage it in concert with some reactionary forces in the BSU. In contrast to the administrators, most minority *faculty* joined and supported the strike. PLP also criticized the lack of specific

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working class content in the demand for Ethnic studies. What kind of education were the students to receive: a sharp anti-racist, proworking class outlook or a pro-ruling class outlook? The secondary criticisms did not affect PL's all-out effort to win the strike.

The Strike Committee began calling its first mass meetings two days before the strike started. These meetings were marked by sharp political struggle, the outcome of which was crucial to the development of the strike. Specifically, there were four major right-wing and racist positions advanced by the RYM (Revolutionary Youth Movement) faction of SDS and their Trotskyite supporters:

- 1.) "The main issue is not really racism but 'due process' and 'campus autonomy'." PLP sharply pointed out that "autonomous racism is still racism."
- 2.) "We should set up our won 'radical' counter-institution off-campus instead of a mass action." When the "counter-institution" position of the RYM had won out at Columbia the previous spring, the struggle quickly collapsed.
- 3.) "White students can't relate to racism. We need to add some white (sic!) demands." PLP exposed this racist position and showed how racism was a key prop of the ruling class and that students must unite against the anti-working class nature of the university in general, and the special oppression of Black and Third World students in particular.
- 4.) As the logical culmination of these positions the RYM-Trot group also proposed that white strikers should have veto power over the tactics and strategy of the minority students!36

The PLP Club struggled against these positions and after considerable discussion and some fierce debate, they were defeated. Many students at the strike meetings had participated in the "Gator suspensions" struggle and the Sit-In and thus were better prepared to reject the racism of these forces by the time of the strike.

From the first day of the strike, the mass militancy of minority students led the struggle. Picket lines had been set up early in the morning but the vast majority of students had gone to class, most not yet won to striking and some just unsure of the seriousness of the call to strike. At noon that day 500 minority students met on campus. Certain forces within the BSU leadership had no intention, at that point, of organizing a real strike to shut the school. They opened the meeting with a lot of nationalist rhetoric and then advised all the minority students to go home. One BSU leader had

announced to the press that morning that "this strike will not be violent" and the BSU "will not forcefully disrupt the university."37 However, the conservative forces in the BSU and TWLF misestimated three factors: (1) the militancy and seriousness of the rank and file minority students; (2) the potential leadership role of the PLP forces in the TWLF in a mass struggle situation; (3) the presence in their own ranks of forces who were wanted to build a real strike. These three factors merged to turn the meeting around when, after 11/2 hours, a Black student stood up and spoke out, "The hell with going home! If we're on strike, then let's shut it down!" Immediately flying squads of 45 to 60 were organized and began turning out classes. By mid-afternoon most classes had adjourned and at 4 p.m. the Administration closed the school, cancelling all classes for the rest of the day. The next day a relatively small number of riot police (25) marched onto campus and took up positions in front of the BSU campus office. About 700 students gathered near them. The cops charged the crowd seeking out minority students to arrest. They arrested four minority students who had participated in the previous day's action. The cops obviously had planned to get several others but 800-900 students forced them to beat a hasty gun-drawn retreat.

President Smith, a political moderate who had replaced Summerskill, conferred with the Board of Trustees and Mayor Alioto and came up with a tactic they hoped would de-rail the strike into an endless talkathon: a campus-wide Convocation. "This will let the fever run its course," bragged Alioto prematurely. The strikers then proceeded to turn the Convo into its opposite: to use the day-long sessions to explain the strike demands and win over the so-called "silent majority," while at the same time, exposing and isolating the racist Administration. During the "good faith" Convocation. six strike leaders (including three members of PLP, Hari Dillon, Bridges Randle and John Levin) received suspension notices from Smith, two hundred plainclothes cops were deployed on campus. and classes were still in session with the Convo being "optional." Since many students were not attending the Convo PL organized teams to go to classes and talk about racism and the demands of the strike. After five days of the Convo it was clear the Administration was stalling and trying to doubletalk around dealing with the university's racist policies. Thousands began to support the strike. Instead of "the fever running its course" the strength of the strike had doubled. The strike leadership had doubled. The strike leadership denounced the "strike-breaking Convocation" and minority AND white students walked out. They marched 2,000 strong

through the campus buildings chanting "on Strike - Shut it Down!"

Smith's liberal tactics had failed to break the strike; he submitted his "resignation." Within hours the Trustees announced the appointment of S.I. Hayakawa, loud mouth neo-facist semanticist, as acting President.\*

With the appointment of Hayakawa the ruling class dropped the facade of liberalism and "democracy" and moved openly to crush the strike by force and terror. Hayakawa declared that he would break the strike "in three days." Rallies on campus were banned. Picketing was banned. It was declared a misdemeanor to be in the campus quad (scene of the strike's demonstrations) and not in class. "I will use as many police as are necessary to restore order," he announced. In addition Hayakawa issued "inciting to riot" warrants for several strike leaders, including the three PLP leaders.

Hayakawa's first day in office was Monday, Dec. 2. The strike steering committee had met and made plans to meet Hayakawa's reign of terror with an escalation of the strike. There was a rally 4,000 strong in the quad. The ruling class must have begun to believe their own press reports to the effect that "it's only a small minority" because they had "only" 200 riot police on hand and these were unable to break up the rally of 4,000. The strikers then marched through the campus and shut it down. There were numerous scuffles with the cops but the latter made no full-scale charge that day because of the tremendous militancy and numbers of the strikers and their won relatively small number. 38

The next day, Dec. 3, was to become known as "Bloody Tuesday" throughout the Bay Area. After Monday's victory for the strikers, Hayakawa had over 1,000 cops and state troopers called in from all over Northern California. The strikers, 5,000 strong, again held a mass rally and demonstration at noon in the center of the campus. The cops attacked from several sides and a pitched battle ensued in which thousands of strikers fought the police forces for over three hours!

Similar rallies and demonstrations resulting in confrontations with the police continued through December and the university was effectively stopped from functioning. Only 15-20% of the student body were still attending classes. The daily rallies and confrontations with the cops involved 4-6,000 (of 6-8,000 who were in school at any one time). The repressive tactics of the Administration not only failed to crush the strike; in fact the strike grew in numbers and in the fighting determination of its participants.

In January the strikers switched tactics to mass picketing around the entrance to the school. By now the majority of students honored the lines and supported the strike. Seven hundred to 1,500 picketed every day starting at 7 a.m. There was great unity and militancy on the lines, which made the frequent police charges unable to break the picket lines.

In addition, on January 6, the AFT, representing 300 out of 1,300 faculty, struck over wages, workload, and the right to collective bargaining. The AFT also supported the students' demands. A serious weakness of the AFT leadership was its attempt to impose pacifism on the strike. However, after the December days it was clearer to the strikers that militancy and self-defense in the face of police brutality were essential to win the strike. In balance, when the AFT struck, it was a big shot in the arm for the strike, making it easier for even more students to stay out. January also saw large-scale support contingents come to State from colleges all over Northern California. Black students at S.F. City College organized a support march over 150 strong from that campus to S.F. State. Scores came from Sonoma State, San Jose State, Sacramento State, U.C. Berkeley, etc. Carloads came from as far away as U.C. Santa Barbara and Fresno State. These contingents brought hugh banners displaying slogans of solidarity and support. Many had held support rallies on their campuses and helped raise bail funds. This great outpouring of solidarity and support from other campuses was a big boost to the S.F. State strikers and marked a new level of unity and solidarity for the student movement.

From the earliest mass meeting of the strike PLP had advanced a two-pronged strategy for victory: (1) to organize *masses* of students at State to fight militantly to really shut down the school around the general line of fighting racism; (2) to develop an antiracist worker-student alliance (WSA) in support of the strike. An Outside Strike Support Committee was formed to carry this out and the PLP led this committee's work.

While the majority of students supported the proposal for a WSA as part of the strike's strategy, few really believed it would develop on the scale that it did and make a vital difference in the strength of the strike. By early December, the one-month old strike had become the main social-political issue in Northern California and was dominating the front pages of the press, T.V., etc. Dillon, Randle and Levin and other strike leaders were the most notorious "criminals" of the hour in the pages of the *Chronicle*. The strike and its focus against racism were being discussed and debated by tens of thousands of workers in S.F. alone. Serious support began to

<sup>\*</sup>Now U.S. Senator from California.

develop in the working class for the strike, and PLP played a vanguard role in organizing this support. This was particularly true among minority workers in the Black and Latin communities where anti-racist consciousness was qualitatively higher. But the strikers made a very serious effort to reach white workers as well around the issue of racism. During November and December, every day after the massive rallies and confrontations were over, the Outside Strike Support Committee organized squads of students to give out a total of 100,000 leaflets to workers as they got off work. In addition, the students went on T.V. and radio talk shows to explain the issues of the strike, held forums in the communities, organized community rallies, etc. When the AFT received official strike sanction (which Alioto had tried desperately to prevent), this opened up even wider opportunities for the strikers to approach union general membership meetings for support.

Some of the highlights of the WSA as it actually developed during the Strike included:

- (1) Third World Community Day: As support for the strike mushroomed among Black and Latin workers and their families, large contingents were organized to come out to the campus. On Thursday, Dec. 5, nearly 150 black working-class strike supporters arrived in three busses and joined the noon rally. Many of these were parents of student strikers. The ruling class was clearly upset over this anti-racist worker-student alliance. Hayakawa went on TV and read a state law prohibiting nonstudents, i.e. workers, from being present on campus. He pledged to arrest any working class supporters of the strike who came on campus again. In response to this threat a Third World Community Day was planned for Monday, Dec. 16. Hundreds from the Black and Latin working-class communities were planning to defy the ruling class threats and come to State to help shut it down. Additionally, the high schools were to let out for the holidays on Dec. 13 and hundreds promised to join the Strike. Now Hayakawa had promised to keep the campus open for business at all costs. But the threat of several hundred and possibly thousands of minority workers and working-class youth joining the several thousand strikers forced him and his masters to eat their words. At noon on Friday, Dec. 13, Hayakawa announced that he was closing the school a week early. The solid strength of the strikers plus tremendous working-class support proved to be more than the state apparatus could handle.
- (2) Several community support rallies were held at City Hall, the first on Dec. 16. Over 1,500 people, about half workers, came out to express solidarity. Similar rallies were held throughout the strike.

- (3) A Community Coalition of over 100 neighborhood groups was formed to support the strike, which gave out leaflets in their neighborhoods and helped to raise bail money for the hundreds who were arrested.
- (4) The AFT and the various other union locals supporting them called a mass indoor labor rally at the Labor Temple to support the strike. Twelve hundred union workers turned out for this rally on a Sunday afternoon. Besides the AFT and other union spokesmen, two strike leaders from the TWLF addressed the rally, one of whom Dillon, attacked racism sharply and called for a worker-student alliance against it. This call received outstanding applause from the assembled workers.
- (5) Community Mobilization Day, Jan. 6: With the tactical shift to mass picketing to close the school, hundreds who had planned to come Dec. 16 arrived on Jan. 6 to join the mass picket lines. The mass picketing usually numbered 2,000 at its peak but that day the many supporters swelled the line to over 3,000. A similar Community Mobilization Day took place again on Jan. 30.
- (6) Significant segments of white workers began to support the strike. Several locals endorsed the strike after the AFT went out: Painters local, ILWU No. 6, Richmond Oil Workers local, and several AFT locals Moreover, many rank and filers organized carloads to come out to State on January 6.
- (7) The overwhelming majority of campus workers supported the strike. When the AFT put up its sanctioned pickets the cafeteria workers walked out, shutting down the main student cafeteria. The dormitory dining hall workers honored the picket lines, thereby closing down the two dorms. Clerical workers and TA's in Local 1928 walked out in support of the student demands beforetthe AFT struck. The students had made "No reprisals against campus employees who walked out," part of the amnesty demand from the beginning of the strike.

Because of the vital leadership role that the PLP was playing in the State strike, several major red-baiting efforts were unleashed at the height of the strike. President Smith began the anti-communist campaign in November with vague references to the "forces of darkness who are bent on confrontation for their own ends." Hayakawa openly declared that "outside agitators, SDS types, are converging on the S.F. State campus from all parts of the country." Governor Reagan, in his half hour TV talk, said, "these violent demonstrations are attacks against the people of California and are instigated by SDS, PL and the BSU." Mayor Alioto announced at a special news conference that "everything could be settled at S.F. State if the small group of Maoists (PLP) could be isolated."

strike, fought for so hard, was lost.

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During the strike the Party put out numerous independent leaflets, held forums, etc. to reach masses of students with a Marxist-Leninist line. Moreover, the PLP State club did not just verbalize these positions, but the PLP cadre had been instrumental in leading the strike along these lines. The Party membership more than doubled.

In New York City, however, some members of the NSC began to view PL's leadership of the strike with growing alarm. Rosen was quoted by the N.Y. functionary, Bob Leonhardt, when Leonhardt told Dillon that the strike was too militant and "too many PL leaders were arrested."39 Clearly the S.F. State club had not caught the drift of the Party's retreat from the Black Liberation Movement. The January, 1969, Challenge carried, beside the article written by Dillon and Levin, an article written by the NSC entitled "A Working-Class Analysis of the San Francisco Strike Demands" which gently chided the S.F. State club for supporting the "relatively mild" strike demands. "Perhaps some of the rulers wish they had given in on the demands in the beginning." The demands for a Black Studies Department were sharply criticized as nothing more than demands for "changing the color of the brain-washer's face." 40 The April Challenge spelled out in print that the PL club's support of this demand was a "mistake." "But militancy and good intentions. when in support of bad demands, passed down to the cadre on the front lines — "Don't support Black Studies!"41

This left the demand for preferential admissions of minority students. This had always been part of PL's program. But after the strike was over and the movement around the trials of the arrested students was just beginning, a *PL magazine* arrived from New York, attacking this demand too. The Party leadership did a complete flip-flop. Now preferential admissions of minority students to college was attacked as a reactionary demand. Rosen, who authored this attack on the mass movement, the strike and the S.F. State PL Club, incredibly reasoned that Black people would be better off not going to college where they could be "brainwashed."

The *PL* magazine was dutifully, but reluctantly, handed out by the PL cadre on the scene after 2 days of round-the-clock intensive "struggle" sessions with them led by the NSC representative in San Francisco.<sup>42</sup> The result was devastating; the racist attacks on preferential admissions and on the strike in general proved to be just the weapon the anti-PL forces in the BSU needed to isolate PL in the TWLF. PL rapidly lost all its footing among minority students.<sup>43</sup> Among the white students as well, most militants were turned off by PL's openly scab position and PL leadership of the

The history and manner in which the PL magazine article (see below for its content) came to be written shows the depths to which the NSC sank in order to get PLP totally out of the BLM on the campus. In early 1969 Epton was sent to San Francisco to co-chair with Dillon a conference of 15 or so PLP minority students. The purpose of the conference, was undoubtedly to quell the "nationalism" of the West Coast students. But Epton, who opposed the retreat from the BLM, and Dillon, who opposed the NSC-inspired retreat at S.F. State, did not push the official Party line and the conference backfired on the NSC. There were three proposals. One was an internal report by Dillon which urged participation and Marxist-Leninist leadership of the anti-racist struggle for preferential admissions. The second was an article by Don King analyzing the Black student movement in a positive way, while offering Marxist critiques in the context of building the anti-racist struggle. The third was a proposal by Bill Epton for a large national conference of Black and Latin and Asian students led by PLP and other progressive forces in the BLM.44

The NSC, of course, had no use for these proposals, and the process of Epton's ouster as Party leader dates from his "failure" in San Francisco. The proposal for a large national conference was dismissed as a CIA plot. "Just as the CIA controlled the National Student Associations, the ruling class will try the same with a national Black Student organization. . " (PL, May 1969), Rosen wrote shortly afterwards. Dillon's internal report was changed by Rosen: he dropped Dillon's arguments for joining the battle for preferential admissions and for hiring of minority faculty. Rosen then gave this report the title, "One-World Imperialists Run 'Third World' Student Movement" and published it in PL magazine (May 1969). 45

But the most significant indication of Rosen's displeasure with the conference and its position of participating in the BLM was what he did to Don King's article. King, a Black student in Boston, later sarcastically remarked "I have to pick up a PL mag to see what I'm writing these days." Rosen completely rewrote King's article, and used it as a vehicle to launch his attack on preferential admissions; then signed King's name with the footnote that the author was an Afro-American student in Boston. This way it would seem that a Black student was denouncing the Black student movement, something Rosen was unprepared to step up front and do in his own name.

The article with the shamefully racist title "Black and Brown Students Used" (PL, May 1969) characterized the demands of the BLM

on campus as "mainly bourgeois." "These demands. . . perpetuate imperialism." Rosen called instead for a worker-student alliance, not a militant WSA forged in struggle as had been the case at S.F. State only another summer work-experience in factories for Black students based on the need for them "to develop in themselves an attitude of serving Black working people." Rosen then went on to slander Black students in general and the nationalism of the period in particular:

"In the immediate future, and in most cases (given the weakness of conscious Left forces in the Black Liberation Movement), we will have to make some concessions to the nationalism widespread among Black students. Thus, Black student groups will prevail.

"In response to the racism they have suffered from white students and white workers, many Black students have developed a bad outlook. Most Black students assert that racial divisions, rather than class divisions, are primary. Many Black students see all whites as the enemy of the Black people. Black nationalism denies any fundamental class divisions among either whites or Blacks. No distinction is made between those whites who benefit from racism and perpetuate it, namely the ruling class, and those who pick up racism from the ruling class and are hurt by it — the white working class. Nationalism denies that class exploitation is the basis of racism. Instead, nationalists assert that Black millionaires, cops, generals, steelworkers, teachers and domestics are all oppressed in basically the same way. Supposedly they all have the same interests with regard to all whites. Thus nationalism diverts minority working people from struggle on a class basis and from making alliances with white students and workers. Nationalism even prevents Black people from uniting — workers and middle class - to fight imperialism successfully.

"There is no such thing as revolutionary nationalism. . . national consciousness is still a long way from class consciousness."

Then Rosen came right out and said it in print. PLP would not support the demands for preferential admission of Blacks to the colleges.\* In fact in view of PLP, Black people would be better off not in school so they could learn about class struggle:

"We cannot support the movement for more Black working-class — or white working-class students. The movement implies that the university is going to teach working-class youth how to change society for the

\*A recurring theme in PL was missionarism that students, particularly Black students should feel guilty about going to the university; "class privilege" was the term used.

better — perhaps even how to make a revolution. It is a slap in the face of Black people, because it gives the ruling class another way to co-opt some of the most disciplined forces from the ongoing Black struggle."

Why should PL help "behead" the people's movement by putting working-class kids in schools and tying them up in administering Black Studies Schemes?

"... And the ruling class gets an extra bonus by combing through thousands of working class youths to come up with a little more brain power to perpetuate the bosses' system.

"Why should we help the ruling class denude the working-class movement? The movement for preferential admission helps create the illusion that the way to solve workers' problems is to send their children to the university.47

In a follow up article (by "Don King") in August PL (V. 7, No. 2) PLP stated that "although masses of Black students are obviously willing to fight racism and imperialism the basic character of the Black student movement is reactionary. Black student groups are by and large led by nationalists and liberals who are generally very anti-communist, oppose sharp on-campus struggle in the interests of Black workers and are sometimes agents of the ruling class."

This arrogant, racist garbage by Rosen served to thoroughly isolate PLP from the BLM on and off campus. After all, how could PL cadre approach a Black worker and tell him his kids would be better off not going to college so they could learn about class struggle in the streets? Thus we can see the PLP retreat from the BLM in stages: First a deliberate shying away from the Black rebellions of 1967 and 1968, second the loss of the Harlem club in late 1968, third the attack on the Black Student Movement in early 1969. And at every step there was the expulsion of Black PL leaders who didn't go along. The last act of this shameful drama was the attack on the Black Panther Party (BPP).

In the period 1967-68 with the BLM surging ahead to unheard of heights a left leadership vacuum developed. The experiences of Newark, Detroit, Washington, Pittsburgh, Columbia, Orangeburg and San Francisco State had radicalized literally tens of thousands of Black workers and working class students. These tens of thousands were no longer willing to follow the non-violent successors to Martin Luther King or reactionary nationalists like Karenga, Carmichael or Foreman. These tens of thousands admired Mao-Tse-Tung and Ho Chi Minh and were ready for Marxist-Leninist leadership. But this

was precisely the period that PLP was beating a hasty retreat from struggle around the BLM and was developing an ideology to denounce the mass demands as nationalist or bourgeois. The CP nor any other Marxist or psuedo-Marxist group had a base or program to appeal to these potential Black Marxist-Leninists. The BPP organized around a ten-point program of militant reforms most necessary to Black workers, jobs, housing, schools, end to police brutality. The BPP called for armed self-defence of the Black community in fighting for these goals.

By the end of 1968 the BPP had a huge base of support in Oakland as well as chapters with several hundreds of young Black militants in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, Chicago, New York and elsewhere. At first PLP hailed the Panthers, and in the aftermath of the murder of Bobby Hutton the May, 1968 Challenge urged support rallies and that money be sent to the BPP, "Let us unite in and with the Black Panther Party and strengthen the movement." But the FBI developed a national plan to destroy the BPP and vicious murders and police ambushes of BPP members became widespread. As the FBI organized the local police to pour a shower of bullets upon the BPP, PLP began to pour a shower of verbal abuse on the BPP. PL step-by-step backed away from its original wholehearted support. First there was critical support then just plain criticism then an out-and-out slanderous attack, and finally a fist-fight.

- The September, 1968 *Challenge* contained news of PL support for the BPP in the wake of the murder of three of their members in Los Angeles and the news of a PL-organized picket to oppose police suppressions of the newly formed Brooklyn chapter of the BPP. But missing was the earlier editorial encouragement for the BPP.
- The October, 1968 Challenge had the first criticisms and warnings. PLP warned the BPP about falling for "liberal rhetoric" and criticized them for appealing to the federal court for protection against police assault. They were told they "must be strong" and "refuse to play games with the 'man.' They must continue to give Black people this image though the crackdown continues."
- Then nothing in *Challenge* for 6 months, until the story entitled "Panthers shot Nationalism Guilty" (March, 1969). At an April 19 conference in Oakland for Black workers a PL spokesman attacked the BPP for supporting the idea that revolutionaries could hold union positions. The BPP responded with the first public attack on PL.<sup>49</sup> In January, 1969 PLP issued a statement on the BPP accusing them of sectarianism (This from PLP!!); "tendencies

toward Yippieism;" allying with "weird" and "degenerate" white groups, but no Black groups; having a "low regard for Marxism-Leninism;" "no class outlook," for believing "they are out to fight a war against white people in general;" and of shifting "all their activity to their own defense." "They have generally ignored other areas of struggle in the Black community." (PL, V. 6 No. 6). This unprovoked one-sided attack was untrue in essence and totally ignored all the positive features of the BPP.

- In June the *PL* (V. 7 No. 2) came out with a second article entitled "FBI CP SWP Combo Tries Baiting Panther Trap." In this article the picture is painted of the BPP as little more than a CP front group. The BPP was accused of being in league with the AFL-CIO bureaucracy, of retreating from armed self-defence; the Breakfast for Children was mere "charity." Then the article tried to divide the members from the leaders by saying the former were being used. The BPP was said to be only out for a "piece of the profit pie for a small number of Black leaders."
- Finally came the July 18-20 BPP "United Front Against Fascism" Conference. PLP organized 150 to "attend" and leaflet the conference with a sharp attack on the BPP that included most of the above slanders in addition to characterizing the conference as "a clumsy ploy. . . to stop the growth of militant action by the people."50 PLP in a September editorial (PL V. 7 No. 3) later consoled itself that this gathering of 3,000 activists (PL's figures), two-thirds Black, was a "circus of clowns and crackpots... dope addicts, hippies, Yippies, freaks and potheads. . . true opportunists, racists and anti-communists. . . a sorry bag of accumulated scum. . ." organized and controlled by "CP hacks." "In fact an important feature of the conference was the nauseating air of racism that enveloped it: good old American-ruling class-liberal racism, paternalistic and sniveling by turns, but always oppressive. . " Naturally with PL "attending" with this attitude a series of fist-fights developed and PL ended up thoroughly defeated.<sup>51</sup> The physical isolation of PLP from this conference completed the picture of thorough political isolation from the BLM.

After the PLP was thoroughly isolated from the mass Black movement, the BLM within the PLP was attacked in the person of Bill Epton. The all-out attack on Epton had begun at an NSC discussion on leadership, on Sept. 16, 1969, which led to his being dropped from the NC on November 1, 1969. On June 9, 1970 he was expelled by the New York City organization, represented by 40 second level leaders who, according to the NSC, "cheered the call for Epton's expullsion." 52 At the September meeting Epton raised

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many of his disagreements with the NSC in the form of a letter which more than hinted that PL was bourgeois and sectarian. 53 After being dropped from national leadership Epton devoted much of his efforts to building an intermediate organization in Harlem, the Black Workers Congress. The Congress could have been a vehicle to rebuild PL's influence in Harlem, but the NSC was suspicious. After two construction workers, who had quit PL when assigned to a garment center sellers group, joined the Black Workers Congress, hints were spread within the Party to the effect that the Congress was "anti-Party" or "nationalist;" any way the NSC reasoning was that black workers didn't need an intermediate organization but could be won to the Party directly.<sup>54</sup> When the NSC made more obvious moves to dissolve the Black Workers Congress, Epton drew the line. He refused to knuckle under and wrote up a comprehensive critique of PL for the membership at large. The result was his expulsion. In an atmosphere of racist tension other minority members of PL, who were known to disagree with PL's retreat from the BLM, were one-by-one approached by the NSC and pointedly asked to choose between PL and Epton. 55

In this period PLP had begun correcting some of its previous erroneous views about "revolutionary nationalism." In the early days the Party trailed after all kinds of bourgeois nationalist in the Black community, calling them "revolutionary nationalists." PL's Black and white cadre worked and lived separately and PL at its founding convention toyed with the idea of separate Black and white parties for the two "separate nations." PLP in 1967-69 moved to correct these errors, but as the pendulum swung the Party overcorrected; saw all nationalists as reactionary, and ended up equating the nationalism of the oppressor with the nationalism of the oppressed. This was a gross distortion of Marxism-Leninism.

Marxists hold that nations and nationalism arose with capitalism and the ideology of nationalism, as a general rule, serves to build up the capitalist nation-state. Marxists counterpose internationism to nationalism, saying "Workers of the World, Unite." But this does not mean that national struggles are always and at every point reactionary, and should be always opposed by internationalists as PL's dictum would have it.\* A national movement against imperialism is a very progressive force; it can greatly weaken imperialism. As the workers are drawn into the national liberation struggle they

put forward their own demands, and success in the national liberation struggle they put forward their own demands, and success in the national liberation struggle means qualitative gains for the working class of the oppressed nation at the expense of imperialism. A weakened imperialism is to the benefit of all the world's workers. especially the workers in the metropolitan country. Even before imperialism was developed as a world-wide system Marx unstintingly supported national struggles, in particular those of the Polish people, even though they were led entirely by the bourgeosie and there was little working class participation; Marx correctly saw the national struggle of Poland as weakening the Holy Alliance of Russia. Prussia. and Austria, which was the bulwark of reaction in Europe. Lenin in an even more complex situation in Turkey insisted that the Soviet power had to ally with the bourgeois Turkish nationalists of Attaturk, as well as with nationalists in Iran, Afghanistan and India in order to weaken British imperialism, the main bulwark of reaction in Asia. During World War II the communist movement, led by Stalin, united with anti-fascist nationalists like Charles DeGaulle in order to weaken the Nazi main enemy. Today national movements that attack the main bulwark of reaction in the world, U.S. imperialism, must be supported by all Marxist-Leninists. Moreover, this is easier for communists to do because much more so than in Lenin and Marx's day the workers of the oppressed nation are often deeply involved in the national liberation struggle and can win huge moral and material gains with the expulsion of imperialism. Striking examples are Vietnam, Cuba, and Angola.

All this was doubly true for the BLM in the late sixties. The rebellions and other actions of the BLM weakened imperialism vastly; the central cities were in open revolt; the Army and Navy became unreliable if not downright hostile because of the mutinous actions of Black soldiers and sailors; the schools became cauldrons of anti-racist revolt and some of this militancy deeply affected the trade-unions. All of this was in large measure due to the effects of the national movement of Black people. Moreover never in history had a national struggle so involved the working class and Black workers won some serious reforms as a result of the BLM, these included jobs, housing, democratic rights and improvements in glietto food and services. Racism among white workers significantly declined due to the BLM. The BLM was national in form and guided by nationalist ideology. The nationalism played a progressive role. Naturally, nationalism is limited and the limits of some of the reforms could not be transcended without multi-national united working class struggle, therefore communists try to convert the national-

<sup>\*</sup>The point is that nationalism is the political rationale presented to workers by one group of capitalists to fight outside capitalists for profits. And this fight is never in the basic interests of workers,56

ism of the oppressed into internationalism, but do not attack the nationalism of the oppressed as hopelessly reactionary. This kind of attack is reserved *only* for the nationalism of the oppressor (racism).

But PLP equated the two and in practice devoted much more time and energy combating the nationalism of the oppressed, Black nationalism, than white racism. This was a reactionary distortion of internationalism. As this reactionary line developed PL accused its departing Black members of leaving because they wanted to support "revolutionary nationalism." Undoubtedly McAdoo, Douglass, and Mulzac and a great deal of the Harlem Club had been won to the Party partially because the Party had at the outset supported Black "revolutionary nationalism." But those party forces were Marxist-Leninists. Their estrangement from PLP was not primarily because of their nationalism but mainly because PLP no longer participated in the struggles of the Black masses. They correctly viewed this as a retreat. If they turned to nationalism they suffered at the hands of Rosen and company. At any rate what was the justification for the NSC attacks on Epton, who in 1968-9, wrote a series of very good articles for Challenge on the BLM which attacked nationalism from a Marxist-Leninist perspective? He had always fought to implant the internationalist perspective of Marx, Lenin and Stalin into PL's theory. Epton was anything but a nationalist; he suffered for his opposition to PL's abandonment of the BLM, a movement with which he had always been so closely associated.

The S.F. State Strike was likewise anything but nationalist. It was a solid, united multi-racial effort. The minor aspect of the demands that was nationalist was criticized and struggled with from the outset by the PL club, without any prodding from New York being necessary. Yet the NSC purposely and cavalierly sabatoged their anti-racist, internationalist leadership by publishing racist material that separated them from their base, and forced the PL club to become anatagonistic to the main demands of the strike.

The demand for Black Studies could be nationalist or internationalist depending on the concrete character given to the demand in the course of struggle. Nationalists would want to study the ancient African Kingdoms, George Washington Carver, Black Capitalism and contemporary African Governments. Internationalists would want to study the slave rebellions, the Reconstruction, Frederick Douglass, Nat Turner, W.E.B. DuBois, the Black Caucus movement in industrial unions and the African Liberation Movement. In practice there is a mixture of both types of content and the quanti-

ties in the mixture are determined by struggle. If internationalists refuse to participate in the struggle for Black Studies Departments, they will strengthen the nationalist character of these because the movement will be default be totally in the hands of the nationalists. The battle for education in the U.S. has a very long history; culture and the demand for working class culture always follows on heels of workers militancy (i.e. the cultural work done in the 30s by the CP flowed from the drive for CIO) and similarly the demand for Black Studies flowed from the ghetto rebellions and the civil rights movements which produced a great militancy and an increase in anti-Then when minority students continually found racist slanders in the classroom the obliteration of anti-racist struggles. history and the non-existence of the great cultural contributions made by Black and other minority artists - that is when the demand arose for Black and Ethnic studies: one reason or one of the reasons PL never understood this is because most PL student cadre never went to class. Few were serious students. More importantly, PL has always downplayed the role of ideology and ideological struggle in relationship to the campuses (as well as in general) and especially in terms of serious study or work among intellectuals.

The demand for preferential admissions of Black people to college is *never* a nationalist demand. To say Black workers should stay out of college, lest they be brainwashed, is not internationalist; it is *racist*, viciously racist, and in essence is exactly what the ruling class of the U.S. has always practiced and *is* practicing today. Rosen's prediction that the CIA would form a national Black Student Union and that the ruling class would support preferential admissions were as false as the racist reasoning they were based on. It is solidly in the interests of the working class to support preferential admissions under all *conditions*; it is vitally important for genuine Marxist-Leninists to reject the racist lie that Black people are more prone to be brainwashed in college.

The BPP had many weaknesses due to lack of Marxist-Leninist training;\* the leadership was sometimes anarchist in outlook. The principal spokesman for this trend was Eldridge Cleaver. But the BPP was never nationalist in character. In fact the BPP was the number one target of Black nationalists like Ron Karenga. (Two BPP members were in fact murdered in 1968 by agents of Karenga.) The defense of the BPP was, as Harris wrote earlier in *Challenge*, a defense of the BLM, a defense of Black workers against police murder. When PLP moved from defending the BPP to attacking the

<sup>\*</sup>no more than PLP.

BPP at the very time FBI and the police were engaged in a nation-wide slaughter of the BPP cadre, that took the lives of 29 Panthers, PL unwittingly played right into the hands of the police.

It is true that the Black Panther leadership in early 1969 moved temporarily into alliance with the CP, accepted CP money and lawyers and retreated under extremely sharp attack from some of their earlier emphasis on armed self-defense. (They abandoned a number of adventurist tactics, a development genuine Marxists would cheer.) It is also true, however, that a Marxist-Leninist outlook within the BPP was growing; the bitter PLP attacks on the BPP retarded the development of Marxism-Leninism within the organization. Because the PLP attacks were correctly seen as uncomradely at the least, it became utterly impossible for genuine Marxists within the BPP to ally with PLP, and definitely reinforcing the BPP alliance with the CP and RYM forces. Since the BPP, never nationalist, wanted an alliance with white radicals and PLP was self-isolated from the BPP and the BLM, the CP and RYM forces appeared as the best available white allies. PL retreated from the support of the BPP because of the most narrow organizational sectarianism.

The following quote by Stalin shows how diametrically opposed PLP's line on nationalism and preferential admissions was to Marxism-Leninism:

"Restriction of freedom of movement, disfranchisement, repression of language, closing of schools, and other forms of persecution affect the workers no less, if not more, than the bourgeoisie. Such a state of affairs can only serve to retard the free development of the intellectual forces of the proletariat of subject nations. One cannot speak seriously of a full development of the intellectual faculties of the Tatar or Jewish worker if he is not allowed to use his native language at meetings and lectures, and if his schools are closed down."

#### J. V. Stalin, Marxism and the National Question

It is obvious that the Bolsheviks would have warmly supported a movement for Tartar or Jewish studies and departments and preferential admissions of minority students. In fact they set up this type of thing after the revolution on a huge scale.

#### **CHAPTER 4**

### RETREAT FROM THE STUDENT MOVEMENT 1968-1970

In a move that can only be described as just the right thing at the right time, Rosen and Scheer decided in the Spring of 1966 to disolve the M2M and move all PL student cadre into SDS. M2M had built a name for itself as the most radical organization of the New Left. Its newspaper Free Student achieved national prominence and there were a core of PL-students-activists seriously committed to M2M and the Free Student as well as to the Free Universities that M2M'ers were establishing in Berkeley and New York. M2M with its solidly anti-imperialist line was alive and growing. Therefore it took some insight on Rosen's part to see that M2M was an obstacle preventing PL's participation in the broader student movement. Moreover it was by no means as clear in 1966 as it would be in 1968 that SDS meant the broad student movement. Yet Rosen saw this and met with the student leaders to explain this to them. There was some serious opposition on this question by most of the M2M leaders who thought M2M's focus on anti-imperialism was more important to maintain. The PL leadership correctly explained that anti-imperialism would be better put forth by the Party within a broad mass movement than in isolation as M2M. But in addition these M2M leaders suspected that PL was intending to abandon an anti-imperialist outlook in the student movement altogether. Already in 1966 there were indications that PLP's line on imperialism was less than solid. Although it took a few more years to develop the retreat from anti-imperialism in the student movement, the suspicion was well founded. However, maintaining M2M was not the answer, the struggle for an anti-imperialist outlook could have been fought through in a PLP that was working in SDS. Rosen did not hesitate to push matters to a split. This was unnecessarily heavy-handed: the M2M leaders could have been worked with on some other terms. At any rate some 20 PL members quit over the matter but those that remained, at least in New York and Boston, joined SDS chapters that existed or formed new ones where none existed. Jeff Gordon was appointed new PL student coordinator. \*57

The Clear Lake, Iowa SDS Convention in August, 1966 marked

<sup>\*</sup>M2M was dissolved immediately on the West Coast too, but PL'ers were not fully into SDS there until the fall of 1967.

PL's formal debut in SDS. Fresh from defeating HUAC the 30 or so PL members and their base were welcomed by the anti-imperialist faction (Carl Davidson, Greg Calvert, Jeff Shero) that was in the process of seizing control of SDS from the New York and Michigan based social democrats (Tom Hayden and Steve Max). Throughout 1966 and 1967 there were no serious conflicts between PLP and the new SDS National Office (NO) leaders. PL's influence was growing through active leadership in the campus struggle. By the end of 1967 PL was largely in control of the important New England region as well as in control of key SDS chapters at UCLA, S.F. State, Brooklyn College, Roosevelt (Chicago). PL members were also influential at other key chapters in New York, New Jersey, Chicago and California.

The new leaders of SDS had no clearly defined politics at that time. They thought of themselves as "student syndicalists," identified with Ho Chi Minh and/or other anarchist-New Left student activists in France, Germany and Japan. They were anti-imperialist and open to Marxism, although anti-communist enough to want to keep PL at arm's length. It was a mixed group, some especially in New York were leary of PL from the M2M days or because of the heavy-handed way the NC dissolved the M2M. But in 1967 it would have been possible to work closely with these forces and perhaps win some of the best of them into PL, if PLP were not in the process of developing such an anti-Vietnamese line. At any rate PL developed no such plan and evidenced no desire to win over the SDS'ers and instead PL developed work on the chapter level and on the campus not so much in opposition to the NO but clearly apart from them. Under these circumstances it was inevitable that conflicts and jeolousies would develop as PL's influence grew.

Paradoxically the PL retreats from the anti-war movement and the BLM strengthened PL's hand temporarily within SDS as energies diverted from the anti-war struggle off campus and from the BLM found an outlet on the campus. In 1967 PLP-led or influenced SDS chapters:

- led the series of sharp mass struggles at San Francisco State, described above
  - led actions of 1,000 students against Dow Chemical at UCLA
- led a sharp struggle at Columbia against class ranks for the draft
- led other actions at Rochester U., U.C. Berkeley, City College of New York (CCNY), Queens College, Rutgers and half a dozen Boston area colleges.

The first conflicts with the SDS leadership took place after Milt

Rosen's articles attacking the "Stop the Draft Week" demonstrations. This caused friction between the SDS regional leaderships in San Francisco and New York, which had been instrumental in the actions, and the PL-led chapters at SF State and at Brooklyn College, Fordham, Rutgers, Queens College and CCNY respectively. 58 In addition both within the U.C. Berkeley and the Columbia chapters tactical and political debate mounted between the leadership, which generally followed the NO, and the PL and friends. In late 1967 John Levin wrote an article for *PL* (V. 6 No. 2) "Power in the University" which mildly and correctly criticized the slogan "student power" advanced in a position paper by Carl Davidson. The spirit was quite friendly and even to the PL student leadership hardly seemed to be what it was, the opening salvo in the sharpest intraorganizational political battle of the sixties: the fight for control of SDS.

Rosen, however, saw the battle looming and prepared his cadre to take over SDS. In January he and Jeff Gordon convened in New York a secret meeting of the PL top student leaders from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Boston and New York. Rosen told them the battle was on for power in SDS; he outlined the political basis for this struggle - worker-student-alliance. Then the group designed the strategy and tactics to challenge the NO at every regional and national meeting hence.<sup>59</sup> The strength of PL at this time was its organizing ability at the campus level; thus sharp struggles would be developed on campus that would have the added effect of progressively weakening the NO forces, which had only the weak organizational apparatus to rely on. This would enable the PL forces to win over the independent SDS forces at campuses or in areas where there were no PL cadre. The concept of "workerstudent-alliance" (WSA) would show SDS a concrete strategy for the ultimate victory of the movement and combat the general student feeling that most of the population was against them. At the same the WSA would expose the NO as anti-working class and isolated not only from the working people, but also from the majority of the campus. In 1968 WSA was given a broad interpretation which meant not only supporting strikes, summer work-ins and struggles of campus workers but also opposing university encroachment of the surrounding community, struggles in university-controlled housing, antiracist actions of all types including support for Black rebellions, support for anti-war soldiers, attacking the class bias of education and even anti-draft actions, as long as special privilege for students was eschewed.

The most positive thing about the WSA was the ideological essence

Columbia and nationally in SDS grew as a result. PLP and the ideas of WSA further gained when Epton and other PL community leaders organized the only significant working-class support for the Columbia rebels.

- On the other hand PL and the NO of SDS were both isolated from the massive electoral campaign around Gene McCarthy. This left the leadership of the August demonstrations in Chicago in the hands of Social Democrats and Yippies. Both PL and the NO suffered from an extreme sectarianism with regard to the election of 1968. In that year of world-wide rebellion it was understandable, but stupid. The NO can be excused out of ignorance but a Marxist-Leninist Party should never have abstained from this campaign. While the rebellions and sit-ins involved tens of thousands, the McCarthy campaign involved at least 5 times that number on some level or other.
- The NO only called for national anti-war demonstrations at the time of the November elections; these were a flop. Only 400 turned out in New York and 300 in Chicago under direct NO leadership. But in Boston where PL held sway 4,000 demonstrated another red feather in PL's cap. PL's organizing superiority within SDS was becoming clearer as 1968 turned into 1969.
- The S.F. State strike, detailed above, caused PL's stock within SDS to skyrocket. Here PL was in the leadership of by far the biggest student action in U.S. history; the RYM forces (the new name for the NO faction) were only an ineffective minority, outside of the mainstream along side of the Trotskyites.
- During the Moses Hall sit-in at U.C. Berkeley, PL and WSA forces played a leading role.
- In December the PL-led SDS chapter held another sit-in at Fordham; in January there were PL-led SDS sit-ins at Harvard and a Los Angeles High School. There were also strong SDS strike support actions in the Figure Flattery strike in New York and during the year-long *Herald-Examiner* strike at Los Angeles. The U.C. Berkeley strike (January-February) led by the TWLF was supported by PL but the new PL line on nationalism and preferential admissions put PL in a much more disadvantagious position than at S.F. State (because the Berkeley strike was beginning as the State strike was ending and PL's racist line was much clearer), however, the NO forces did no better.
- The January 30 sit-in at the U. of Chicago was led by the NO forces. PL forces participated as a minority and were not effective in gaining a leadership role but PL's influence even in this NO stronghold grew. Neither PL nor the NO was involved in the other major

of the program. PL fought for the Marxist line that the industrial working class is the vanguard of revolutionary movement at a time when the ideologues were pushing anti-working class theories of every conceivable variety. Not only did Mike Klonsdy, Bernadine Dohrn and Mike Rudd, etc., tirelessly make fun of the very idea that workers were a revolutionary force, never mind the main revolutionary force, but also ideologues like Marcuse spun full-blown theories to the effect that the working class was reactionary and that all workers were Archie Bunkers. Then there were the "new technocracy" theorists. PL played a role in fighting this in SDS and in the anti-war movement before they quit it. During the first stages of the anti-war movement a majority of the anti-war movement viewed GI's as pigs. (In a demonstration in SF in 1967 some people demonstrating at the Presidio base in S.F. went as far as throwing rocks at GI's.)<sup>60</sup> PL's general polemics especially within SDS played a big role in totally reversing this trend. By the time of the split in SDS, PL's antagonists had dropped their "new working class" or anti-working class posture, and Marcuse was in equally bad repute in both sides of the hall. Though they never would admit it the Revolutionary Union, the October League and others owe much of their pro-worker stance of the seventies to PLP's polemics against them in the sixties.

The WSA was a winning formula. The Spring of 1968 alliance between the student rebellion and the 10,000,000-strong general strike in France gave a strong boost to the PL strategy and for the first time popularized the ideas of WSA among a broad group of U.S. students. The strategy was not long in bearing fruit. The year 1968 was the highpoint of student rebellion in the USA (as well as in Germany, France, Italy, Mexico and even Yugoslavia) and the high point of PL's influence on the campus. Through its politics and activity PL exerted a certain influence at campuses in which it had previously been unknown, such as U.C. San Diego, U.C. Davis, Princeton, Univ. of Hawaii, Univ. of Texas, Michigan State, U.C. Irvine, Bowdoin, and forces from these campuses became allies of PL in the struggle with the NO.

• The late April, 1968 Columbia rebellion was the first opportunity to compare in action PL with the NO forces. And the NO forces, including media-created 'leader' Mark Rudd, definitely came out second best. Early in the sit-in at Low Library the rumors of a police bust sent Rudd and the NO forces scurrying out the windows, while PL members held fast and occupied the building for 5 more days. Later when Rudd regained heart and returned to the fray, PL's leadership role could not be denied. PL's influence at

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action that winter at Duke.

• Early spring saw PL-led SDS action at Queens College, Yale, UCLA and elsewhere. The Queens College action developed into a strike that involved 3,000 sparked by a sit-in of 1,500. But the highlight of the Spring was the Harvard sit-in where 200 were arrested in the citadel of the ruling class. This bold action was led by PL forces against the fierce opposition of the NO minority at Boston. During the subsequent strike, however, PL sectarianism (i.e. refusal to accept alliances with liberals or Black groups) came through and helped isolate the SDS chapter.

So by June, 1969 PL was in effective leadership of much of the student movement. The largest number of the militant student strikes and demonstrations 1968-9 were led by PLP; the NO forces were in third place. (Second place would have to go to various independent non-SDS forces, principally Black student organizations.) The results were a huge growth of PLP among students, a big credit for the ideas of WSA and the WSA caucus, a movement among many of the independent SDS forces (San Diego, Irvine, Hawaii, Texas) toward PLP or at least away from the NO.

Concurrent with the rising sharpness of student action the internal struggle within SDS reached white heat. Within weeks after Rosen broached the strategy of seizing power within SDS in January, 1968 the New York PL student leaders pulled off a coup. At the February 10, 1968 New York regional SDS meeting the NO faction was displaced by PL-led forces and a decentralization plan was put into effect that effectively reduced the power of the SDS regional staff. Subsequently the displaced New York regional leaders became the most bitter antagonists of PLP within SDS, the ones who were to lead the "PL-out" demonstration at the 1968 convention in the summer. The New York coup was then promoted within PL as an example for all regions. 62 Although there were no further seizures of regional power, increasingly acrimonious and bitter arguments became the rule at the San Francisco, Chicago and Los Angeles regional meetings (where the NO held sway) and at the Boston meetings (where PL held the balance of power). In the Spring of 1968 the antagonisms developed more and more bitterly:

- In the February 12 issue of New Left Notes (the SDS paper) three PL members and friends from Boston launched a general attack on the "undemocratic and anarchist" NO.
- For the March 29-31 National Council Meeting at Lexington, Ky., PLP mobilized its main student forces for the first time. The NO was taken to task on the questions of chapter autonomy, the draft (PL favored an SDS position against student deferments) and

the WSA. An article by S.F. State PL'ers opened a short exchange with the NO on racism. But the debate was still somewhat muted, 63 Some 800 activists attended the June 9-15 SDS convention of

1968 at E. Lansing, Mich. and PLP mobilized all its student forces. The PL plan was to have SDS adopt its Student Labor Action Plan (SLAP), and perhaps to get a piece of the national leadership. Some 10% of the convention was in a PL-led caucus; the NO forces were divided but they controlled to varying degrees some 30% of the delegates. This was the last SDS national meeting where independent, mainly campus-based, forces were in the majority. The NO proposal, called "Cities," was based on the politics of the so-callednew working class and called for a "city-planning" strategy on the one hand and paradoxically a tight-knit organizational structure for SDS on the other. The debate was bitter and prolonged, but PL was sharply vocal in its opposition to the NO proposal, which lost by the vote of 485-355. Some key anarchist NO forces would not go along with this proposal, but the NO defeat came mainly because the independent campus forces were suspicious of the NO purposes. The main author, Bell, blamed PLP, however, and launched into a bitter anti-PL speech immediately after his proposal was defeated. The NO followed this up with a well-orchestrated "PL-out" demonstration designed to intimidate PL out of SDS. Jeff Gordon rallied the PL forces to stand up to this extremely sharp situation and the majority of the convention refused to go along with the NO ploy. Elections to the new SDS National Interim Committee followed with Jared Israel running as a PL candidate. He probably won a seat, but a "long count" was secretly conducted by the NO and only solid NO candidates were declared winners. The SLAP plan never came up for a vote.64

The PL-led actions in the school year 1968-1969 put PL in an increasingly stronger position in the subsequent SDS meetings. In the meantime Gordon geared up the PL forces for the battles ahead. In the summer he wrote an internal report in which he characterized the convention as a "sharp class struggle." The formula for PL victory he said was to include in the PL caucus "center people who have questions about various things we hold but will work with us." He called for the immediate formation of regional WSA caucuses -MUCH BROADER THAN THE PL LINE. "These (caucuses) can be organized around support for SLAP and the work-in, but also may be broader than that. This is a sharp class struggle."65 Gordon then wrote an article for the October, 1968 PL analyzing the interesting convention, the politics of the NO factions and laying the , ideological groundwork for the confrontations ahead.

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While the student leadership of PL worked for a broader approach in dealing with the NO, *Challenge* was steadily narrowing down the PL line and thus the ability to unite with the honest anti-imperialist forces in SDS. Besides the vicious attacks on the BPP, preferential admissions and even the S.F. State strike, the Party line on Vietnam grew even more strident, sliding into pro-U.S. chauvanism. The November 1968 *Challenge* said "Ho & Co." are "simply reduced to haggling over the terms of their surrender. . . Vietnam north and south will become available as missle sites for the U.S.-Soviet attack on China." To the extent that the "center forces" with whom Gordon was trying to unite read these far-fetched predictions in *Challenge* it made them more than suspicious that PL was still a force at all in the anti-war movement. In an even more far-fetched editorial comment *Challenge* lectured SDS on its sectarianism vis-a-vis the elections. (Coming from PL this was laughable.)

The October 11-13 SDS National Council meeting in Boulder, Colorado was attended by 600. SLAP finally came up for a vote after a sharp debate, in which PL fought mightily on the politics, but lost 2-1. A debate on high school work gave Gordon the opportunity to make an important speech against the use of drugs in the revolutionary movement; it was well received. A bitter struggle emerged over the plan of the NO to unite anti-war actions with the National Mobilization. PL disguised its real desire to quit the anti-war movement altogether with a proposal for independent SDS-led demonstrations. PL was defeated in this as well.

The December 27-31 SDS National Council Meeting in Ann Arbor, Michigan was attended by over 1,000. Here PL was in a particularly strong position due to its concurrent leadership in the S.F. State battle. (The racist PL attacks on the strike had not come out yet.) Here PL went on the offensive and for the first time won a major vote on its own proposals. The S.F. State SDS group moved a proposal "Fight Racism" based on the experiences of the S.F. State strike. The NO tried mightily to block it, arguing that PL's national political line of equating nationalism and racism was unacceptable.

The NO was defeated, not because the majority of SDS agreed with the PL line on nationalism, but because they heartily agreed with the practice of PL at S.F. State. The sharp dichotomy between the NSC-PL line and the practice and line of PL at S.F. State had not yet emerged. And though the NO was perspicacious enough to sniff out this dichotomy they could not win the vote. The PL victory on this vote was a big blow to the previous NO hegemony. The NO's narrow victory on another proposal, Mike Klonsky's "Youth Movement" proposal, could not mask their obviously weak-

ening position. Out of this, however, Klonsky and company formed their Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM) to oppose PL centralism with centralism of their own faction.\*

At the March National Council at Austin, Texas the shoe was on the other foot, and the RYM came prepared with and passed a raft of anti-PL proposals. These included support of the BPP, a repudiation of PL's December "Fight Racism" proposal, a defense of Vietnam and the peace talks (anathema to PLP) and new RYM proposals. The PL WSA and anti-drug proposals were defeated. The meeting was the bitterest yet, a precursor of the split convention to follow. PL called the RYM "tools of the imperialists" and RYM said PL was "spreading lies" about the NLF and thus "working objectively in the interests of the U.S. ruling class." The threatened violence of the 1968 convention now broke loose on the floor and fists flew briefly on more than one occasion. The stage was set for the split.

For the final Convention both sides pulled out all the stops. PL mobilized every student it could. (From the West Coast PL chartered a plane to bring 150 of its forces to Chicago.) The RYM did the same and in addition brought in the BPP to lead the attack on PLP. (This proved to be a tactical blunder, as the particularly sectarian and shamelessly sexist BPP spokesman at the Convention turned off more forces than he rallied to the RYM).

At last PL found a match in organizational sectarianism in the RYM forces. The WSA forces numbered no more than 1/3 of the 1,500 who attended the convention; the committed pro-NO forces (These included the dominant Weatherman group, led by Bernadine Dohrn; the RYM II forces around Klonsky; the Bay Area Revolutionary Union led by Bob Avakian; a Chicago Maoist group led by Ignatin; the smaller CP forces and some Trotskyites) outnumbered at least slightly the WSA-caucus, and less than 1/3 of the convention was uncommitted. The PL floor leaders showed by far a greater ability for united front tactics than the beleagured NO. Given the narrowness and unpopularity of PL's line and the popularity of the BPP and Ho Chi Minh, Gordon and Israel's feat at the 1969 convention was even greater than just numbers would indicate. They were helped by RYM's obvious internal infighting, and its inability to agree on a plan. At the crucial moments the RYM forces were clearly captive to Dohrn's fits of irrationality. Her speeches tended to be apolitical anti-PL ravings and her organizational maneuvers were ill-timed and caught the other RYM leaders off guard.

<sup>\*</sup>Klonsky, a former regional organizer in Los Angeles, became national Secretary after the 1968 convention.

The WSA caucus itself was a united front: united against the NO, in support of the general lines of PL's practice, and in support of the SLAP proposal. But even in the WSA key forces, probably a majority did not agree with PL's lines, either on Vietnam, preferential admissions nor on the BPP. Moreover, the PL forces at the convention united with most of the uncommitted delegates as well as some who had even less ideological affinity to the PL line; many of these were just plain liberals. So a very broad united front operated and even included some national SDS leaders, like Fred Gordon of the NO who had little use for PL's general line. Here the PL leadership on the floor combined skillful united front work to unite with the majority while defending the Party line. It was no mean task.

PL fought for democracy within SDS and the right of PLP to stay in SDS and in this they were supported by the majority. When the BPP speakers made some crass disgusting anti-women remarks in the course of an anti-PL tirade on the third day of the convention the tide turned against the NO. Dohrn, apparently against the better judgement of Klonsky, announced a walk-out of the hard-core RYM people (250) at this low ebb in the NO's fortunes. The next day the RYM returned to the floor to hear Dohrn announce the expulsion of PL. The RYM then walked off to have their own convention. Some 700 went with RYM; 800 stayed with PL. SDS was split, but PL was left in control of SDS. RYM itself split, irreconcilably within 6 weeks into the Dohrn-Rudd Weathermen and RYM II. RYM II split by 1970 into Klonsky's October League and Avakian's RU, Ignatin's Revolutionary Federation and Bruce Franklin's Venceremous Brigade. The RYM II forces immediately gave up the name SDS to the Weathermen who in turn declared SDS totally dead after an abortive anarchist action in Chicago that October, But on the campuses there were still 50,000 SDS'ers: PL had an open field by October, 1969.

Given the line of PLP and the sectarian method of PLP's work the split was inevitable. In the end PL tried to avoid the split and preferred to keep SDS together; it was the RYM forces that were for rule or ruin. The RYM forces used their organizational hegemony to try to destroy SDS rather than turn it over to PLP; they understandably but mistakenly thought a PL takeover was in the cards in 1969. They felt (and rightly so,) that a PL-run SDS would self-destruct anyway.

The immediate onus for the split goes to the NO, not PL, but we should not let PL off the hook so easily. A different Party with a different line would have tried to win over the majority of the NO forces, not fought to destroy them. In 1967 the SDS leaders were

open to PL and Marxism-Leninism. But PLP adopted a policy of ignoring or attacking the leadership and working with the base; thus as the NO forces developed their ideology they did so apart from PL and eventually in antagonism to PL. This sectarian style of PLP (ignore the leadership, try to win their base from them) repeated itself again and again. Eventually in 1977 it was put forth openly as a principle of PL Party work: "Approaching the leaders without making serious inroads within their base inevitably results in watering down our line in order to make the grouping seem more palatable to these leaders." (April 5, 1977 Internal Bulletin.) This method prevented PL from working with those SDS leaders open and friendly to PL and made the split inevitable.

Of course, even with the best methods of work, PLP would have had scant success winning over the SDS leaders with its anti-Vietnamese line, its line of abstention from the off-campus anti-war Movement, its vicious attacks on the BPP and its racist line of opposition to preferential admissions. These positions of PLP were were extremely unpopular in SDS and anathema to the leadership of SDS. PL won a majority at the split convention, DESPITE these lines or rather because the SDS rank and file were unfamiliar with these lines and the NO failed to effectively expose PL politically. PL won a majority because (1) of PL's leadership in the active oncampus struggle from S.F. State to Harvard; (2) the RYM and NO were unpopular and generally seen as do-nothing bureaucrats at best, or dangerous anarchists at worst; (3) the growing popularity of the WSA and "Fight Racism" proposals: (4) the skillfully broad united front approach taken at the convention. Nevertheless the more sophisticated minority on non-PL SDS would never turn over the organization to a Party which held to what they rightly regarded as such counter-revolutionary lines. And so the split was inevitable.

However one divides the blame for the split in SDS, or acertains its inevitability, it was not inevitable that SDS subsequently die; that was all PL's doing. If RYM can be blamed in large measure for splitting SDS, PL gets the full blame for killing SDS. Aside from the Seattle area and a few scattered chapters here and there, the Weathermen had no following at the chapter level. The RYM II forces were even more isolated from the campus; they controlled not a single major SDS chapter; although at UC Berkeley the Radical Student Union, controlled by the RU, was at least as big as SDS. Thus there was no serious subsequent contest on the campus level for control of SDS. The field was open to PL's SDS to take organizational control of at least 80% of the chapters. Moreover, a correct united front strategy could have significantly broadened SDS because especially

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during the 1968-9 school year the sectarianism and anarchist posturing of the NO had turned off thousands of radical students and kept SDS much smaller than necessary. SDS could have been unified and greatly expanded around opposition to the war and leadership of the anti-racist struggles on the campus. This had been the plan that Gordon had outlined a year earlier, and it was this kind of strategic and tactical thinking that led to the PLP victory at the Split Convention. Now it was necessary to carry this broad program to the campuses. If PL was ready to lead SDS on the basis of all kinds of anti-war and anti-racist action the WSA caucus would grow too as part of a bigger and broader SDS. On July 3, 250 SDS'ers attended a regional meeting in New England and defeated motions by Bill Ayers and other RYM people by more than 5-1.66 This meeting (admittedly in PL's strongest region) indicated the broad basis of support available for PL as opposed to RYM leadership within SDS.

This was the initial thrust of PLP in SDS. The first issue of PL-run New Left Notes (June 30) clearly was leaning in the direction of a broad SDS. This issue contained an article on preferential admission which, while not mentioning PL by name, strongly refuted the PLP position. It also had an article entitled "Defend the Panthers." The lead article emphasized fighting racism, promised that SDS was not closed and would be "politically diverse." The SDS statement on the walkout "reaffirmed" SDS support of Vietnam, the BLM and the BPP, demanded immediate withdrawal from Vietnam; it gave prime place to these issues which could unify 50,000 SDS'ers and only secondary spot to the WSA.

Rosen moved fast to stop this. Almost immediately afterwards he met with Gordon and Israel and put forward his idea for the basis of the student movement, a campus-worker-student alliance (CWSA). He meant dropping all anti-racist and anti-war activity and putting SDS in the position of operating as a militant grievance committee for campus workers. Gordon and Israel opposed this line; they felt that the war and anti-racism were the issues that moved hundreds of thousands the previous year and could this year as well, that the CWSA, though nice, wouldn't become a mass issue. Rosen then went into a typical tirade about how they, not having been workers themselves, did not understand about workers and the history of the working class and so on.<sup>67</sup> The two student leaders at length gave in and reluctantly helped Rosen convince or intimidate the rest of the PL campus leaders, who did the same with the national SDS and local PL cadre, and thus the CWSA became not only PL's line but SDS's line. The SDS line was in this way rapidly narrowed down, beyond even what had unified the WSA caucus. (CWSA was only a

small part of the broad SLAP proposal.) The chance for a PL-led mass SDS was irretrievably lost and the PL retreat from the student movement was on. Just to make sure this stuck, Rosen had Gordon removed as national student organizer (He was kicked upstairs) and replaced by Bob Leonhardt, a loyal Rosen flunky, but with absolutely no background in mass struggle.\* John Levin was likewise at the same time removed as West Coast student organizer and "promoted".

The next issue of New Left Notes (July 30, 1969) illustrated the 180° change in PL's approach to SDS. The lead article, taking up all of the front page, was "Ally with Campus Workers." There were two other articles on CWSA, taking up 30% of the paper in toto. The majority of the rest of that issue was devoted to a long attack on the BPP. This three-page article was more nicely written but basically the same in essence as the super-sectarian PL attack on the Panthers' "United Front Against Facism Conference," mentioned above. The BPP was accused by SDS of backing "liberal imperialism," being controlled by the CP, etc. The editor of this edition saw fit not to even mention in passing the war in Vietnam. (There were still 500,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam in 1969, and around 10,000 of these plus 100,000 Vietnamese died in combat that year, negotiations or no negotiations.) The succeeding issues in August and September also were dominated by the CWSA or other WSA actions, never mentioned the war or the BLM and talked about racism only in the context of the exploitation of campus workers.

When an integral part of a broad struggle against the war and racism, student alliance with campus workers could be militant and have far-reaching implications. The CWSA as it developed during the S.F. State strike and the Harvard strike in early 1969 added to the breadth of these struggles, helped bring campus workers into the main stream of anti-war, anti-racist activity and increased their receptivity to revolutionary politics. The CWSA, as Rosen outlined it in July, 1969 and as Leonhardt loyally put it forward in *PL* (V. 7 No. 4), was narrowly reformist, economist and mainly a forum for student missionaryism. In place of militant demonstrations and sit-ins the CWSA as originally outlined in *New Left Notes* (July 30, 1969) had the following three-point program:

1. People who are working-in should try to get campus jobs starting now. Going into the school year already knowing the situation is a great

\*When Gordon and Israel objected to Leonhardt's selection Rosen said "People underestimate Bob, they don't think he is creative enough. They don't understand the value of a guy who does exactly what he's told."68

advantage. If this is impossible, people should apply anyway for part-time jobs immediately. Some are better than others, but we shouldn't be super-choosy. All areas of school employ full and part-time workers — students and non-students. We belong everywhere!

- 2. Form committees to plan campus worker-student alliance activities, research on-the-job conditions (a good way is by talking to the workers!) as well as the history of 'labor-management relations' at the school.
- 3. We should live in dorms, which not only will help overcome our sectarian attitudes in a very practical way, but help develop ties with dorm workers.

Here was a program for total retreat from militant struggle. This is what PL promised as a program for the most militant student movement in U.S. history, "(1) Get a job, (2) Form research committees, (3) Live in dorms." For campus administrators, who lived through a school year of unprecedented violence, the PL program for SDS must have seemed like the answers to their prayers.

Leonhardt's article, which became the "theoretical" base for CWSA, discusses a serious atrocity at Columbia, where a Black worker was decapitated by an elevator;\* following that are streams of minor organizing incidents, a worker scalded from a leaky coffee machine, a worker forced to clean up extra gym lockers. A Yale worker threw juice at her supervisor. (This was "the sharpest CWSA confrontation yet.") All this was put together with endless repetition of the "verity" that student's anti-worker attitudes were the big obstacle in getting the reluctant PL and SDS cadre out and uniting with campus workers over petty, reformist and narrow tradeunion demands. Finally this super-sectarian self-isolating position was put forth, believe it or not, as the answer to sectarianism. "The basis for this united front will be agreement on the specific greivances of campus workers."

As part of the CWSA, PLP proposed SDS fight for preferential hiring of Black and Latin non-academic campus employees. When combined with PL's famous opposition to preferential admission of Blacks and Latinos to college the gross racism involved was incredible. PL's opponents correctly characterized it as the "out of the classroom, into the kitchen" proposal. The essence of PL's position amounted to calling for more black maids and janitors to clean up

after white students, while opposing the admission to college of children of these workers. It was incredibly racist to call for preferential hiring in job categories where Black and Latins were already "preferred," while in effect opposing their access to mainly white occupations, which require a college degree.

Rosen and Leonhardt had complained that the S.F. State strike was too militant; there were too many arrests. No danger of that with the CWSA.\* After seeing the PL tiger rampaging through the campuses during 1968-9 school year, everyone was amazed at the PL pussy cat tamely talking to campus workers about filing a greivance or something on that order the following year. Moreover, this narrow reformist work did a great diservice to the campus workers who had seen their horizons broadened during the previous year by the massive revolutionary student movement and in a few places campus workers had joined the struggle for educational or anti-imperialist demands that challenged the system. This year the PLP was determined to keep the campus worker in his place, struggling for the most narrow economic reform.

While almost all the PL leadership and most of the membership in the end swallowed Rosen and Leonhardt's bitter pill of retreat from student struggle, SDS did not. A few SDS'ers made the hopeless fight against the CWSA strategy within SDS but the vast majority of SDS members voted with their feet, a thundering NO!! to the CWSA, that PL was trying to cram down their throats. Masses of students left the organization that no longer fulfilled their antiracist and anti-imperialist aspirations. The SDS chapters rapidly withered and died. PL's insistence on the CWSA and nothing but the CWSA killed SDS; the members, the militancy, the democratic debate, the revolutionary fervor so much a part of SDS was gone within 6 months. Where PL forces controlled the chapters in the major PL cities shrunken SDS chapters could be maintained, but as not much more than PL front groups. In a few areas (San Diego, Minneapolis, Salt Lake City) the SDS leadership was won close to or into PLP and these chapters were given some leeway on the CWSA question and thus kept alive, but SDS generally shrunk in those areas as well. In other places the SDS leaders and all members who would go were simply pulled out and brought to major PL cities to take part in the general work of the party; once thriving SDS chapters at Hawaii, Texas, Iowa, Irvine, were left leaderless to die and finally, in areas where PL had little or no influence, Kentucky,

<sup>\*</sup>This episode was written about in at least 10 PL and Challenge articles on the CWSA in 1969-70. By its bald appeal to the students' guilt feelings, the missionaryism inherent in Rosen's concept of the CWSA was made manifest.

<sup>\*</sup>There were a few arrests at UCLA, as an exception, but they led to no movement of either students or campus workers.

Washington, etc., the SDS chapters changed their name and dropped all connection with PL-SDS.69 At any rate in place of 304 SDS chapters in June, 1969 there were no more than 40 SDS chapters left by the spring of 1970 and almost all of these were greatly shrunken in membership. One indication of the shrinking SDS base as early as October 4th was when Boston SDS called a demonstration against negotiations in Vietnam and only 600 showed up compared with 4,000 the year previous.

But while PL and PL-SDS fell into a coma, the student movement in the school year 1969-1970 was still quite healthy, given the fact that almost all the leaders of the past year were missing. PL-SDS had tried to ignore the anti-war movement, but the 1969-70 year was the year of the most widespread anti-war protests; millions participated. PL-SDS tried at first to see if it could divert the protests against U.S. agression in Vietnam into a protest against the Vietnamese for negotiating; thus in September-October PL-SDS organized demonstrations against the negotiations in Boston, New York, Chicago and a few other places, but they were very poorly attended. Therefore a plan for a PL-SDS counter-demonstration at the Nov. 15 mass march was dropped. PL-SDS participated and formed a break-away march to the Labor Department to support the General Electric Strike. But outside of this, PL-SDS put its blinders on and ignored the war. Therefore PL was in general fairly isolated when the Cambodia-Kent State-Jackson State demonstrations left the campuses in flames. There were three illuminating exceptions.

At the U. of Maryland an SDS chapter there that had somehow managed to avoid much of PL's sectarianism was able to lead a violent struggle there of 5,000 students against the police and national guard in protest of Cambodia and Kent State. (Maryland was fortunate in having only 1 PL member, who was criticized as being "weak" in pushing PL's line.)70

At S.F. State the PL club had stubbornly gone its own way and tried to remain in the leadership of the mass movement. In the spring of 1970 they led a series of sharp mass confrontations which brought the club once more into conflict with the Hayakawa administration and the NSC of PLP. In March, Hayakawa announced that the war recruiters would return to the campus for the first time in 2 years. PL-SDS entered a united front with other anti-war forces and convened a mass meeting of 250 students, which in turn led to a mass demonstration of 1,500 students against the recruiters and the police who had been called in. Shortly afterwards PL-SDS and the TWLF led a sharp mass struggle to preserve the Black Studies department from Hayakawa's attacks. As a result, Hayakawa an-

nounced at a press conference that Hari Dillon was to be banned from the S.F. State campus.

But Hayakawa was not the only one upset. Dillon received a phone call from Leonhardt in which Leonhardt criticized Dillon for "not building the CWSA" and reiterated that "the Party's line is that the war is not the issue we should be fighting around." Dillon was told by telephone from New York, "Black Studies is not the issue at S.F. State anymore." Finally, after Dillon and other PL'ers were arrested during the Cambodia upsurge, the local Party Chief, F. Jerome, told Dillon that Rosen and Leonhardt had decided Dillon should no longer be West Coast Student Organizer but should move on to do "more important" Party work. Jerome, himself, assumed direct leadership of the student work shortly afterwards to see to it that the PL student club at S.F. State disband for all intents and purposes and that all mass activity by PLP on campus cease.71

A second exception also in the Bay Area was U.C. Berkeley. There in early 1969 a well-reasoned anti-ROTC pamphlet was passed out by SDS. Soon afterwards an SDS-sponsored speech by a leader of the Liga Socialista Puertoriquena on the recent anti-ROTC action in Puerto Rico inspired a march to the ROTC building that ended in a battle with police. PL-SDS initiated a broader mass movement; evening mass meetings usually numbered about 1,500; demonstrations had up to 6,000. The invasion of Cambodia came a few weeks after the mass movement had begun, and added thousands more to the ranks of the fighters. By now the campus was being shut down every afternoon by the demonstrators (and the tear gas). At this point the administration moved in to try to co-opt the movement. They shut down all classes for 3 days and held a convocation in the Greek Theatre. There they called for a strike of the University against the U.S. government. It was at this point that PLP lost leadership of the movement because the club refused to participate, in the liberal administration organized activities, instead put out leaflets which said "This Is A Strike?" and PL became more and more isolated. Nevertheless SDS and PLP did gain a great deal of respect from the struggle.

But similar mass actions against Cambodia-Kent State that took place over all the country, found PL and SDS forces on the outside looking in, still trying to unite with campus workers. At the U. of Illinois, Wayne State and Columbia PL joined the mass movement, which was under the leadership of other forces, but elsewhere PL-SDS did not even do that much.

Columbia provided the final irony. For nearly a year the faithful few PL'ers on campus tried everything to build the CWSA; they

protested on all sorts of local economic grievances. No incident was too petty or reformist for the PL student missionaries to be right in there with the good old CWSA. PL worked hard and long, put out reams of leaflets, organized dozens of tiny CWSA picket lines. Still no CWSA, no discernable movement toward PL on the part of the campus workers. No greivance or issue was too economist\* for PL to use in hopes of moving the "backward, trade-union oriented" campus workers. But the CWSA was a total flop, a big zero by spring. Come Cambodia the students (not PL) stormed through the campus protesting the invasion and, lo and behold, hundreds of campus workers joined them. Some 200 campus workers took over Low Library to demand time off during the student strike; when the university said no, the workers themselves declared a strike. A real CWSA, not led by PL or SDS, but led by the anti-war movement, which had been abandoned by PL.72

The Cambodia-Kent State actions and nationwide student strike had to be sobering, at least to the PL student leadership, if not to the NSC. PL's isolation from the student movement was painfully evident. On June 20-28 a national student collective meeting after some struggle forced a self-criticism to be issued:

"Unless we can reverse this approach, SDS will die.

"Why does this emergency exist? Over the past year we have put into practice a left-sectarian line around CWSA. CWSA is key, particularly in fighting racism, but we had the approach of putting all our eggs in one basket and holding back struggles against the war. Though we said anti-war struggles were good, we made no consistent plans to guarantee them. After Cambodia, it became apparent, even to us in our isolation, that the war is the primary issue around which masses of students are fighting back. But given our sectarian approach around the war all year, we did not have the outlook or a base of students won to our ideas on the war to take consistant leadership in the strike.

"Since we didn't see fighting against the war as primary, we also developed CWSA in a mechanical way. If we had united with other students around the war, however, a much larger number could probably have been won to see that uniting with campus workers, especially in struggles against racism, builds a much deeper and stronger movement to fight against the war 73"

But even this mild self-criticism was not allowed by the NSC to

\*Economists were antagonists of Lenin in the middle period of Bolshevik organizing. They believed the workers' movement should be restricted to economic demands and stay out of broader political struggles.

stand. As far as Rosen was concerned the only error was that CWSA had not been worked at hard enough. As for SDS, "I could see it was finished when it did nothing to support the postal strike," Rosen subsequently remarked. Thus in the next student internal we read:

"The last student collective letter indicated that the principal error we had been making in the SDS work was our inadequate development of mass anti-war struggle. The reasoning behind this evaluation was that since the Cambodia invasion was the largest student uprising of the year, since SDS did not grow qualitatively during the period of the invasion, and since the invasion proved that the war was the greatest mass issue among U.S. students, then it stood to reason that our principal error was in not pushing SDS far enough in an anti-war direction.

"The student collective reconsidered this evaluation and judged it to be incorrect. First of all, although the war played a major role in the May uprisings, it was not the only issue on the minds of thousands of militant students. The Kent State killings were equally as significant, if not more so, in provoking mass outrage. Secondly, although inadequate leadership in the anti-war struggle constitutes a real and serious weakness, this has not been the main weakness. In terms of class significance, the postal strike was far more important than the Cambodia. . . and SDS did less around the strike than around Cambodia. It didn't mobilize thousands of students to support the postal workers in each city — although support was objectively possible.

In fact, broadly speaking, this was the key weakness: vacillation on the question of worker-student alliance.75"

Incidently this line of Milt Rosen's, that an economic strike of U.S. workers is more significant than an armed liberation struggle abroad was repeated in a number of internals and private conversations in the seventies until it was believed to be true by most members. 76 This is an economist deviation from Marxism and in fact history shows that support of liberation struggles inspires the greatest Revolutionary activity among workers. The June, 1848 Revolution of French workers was inspired by the Polish national liberation struggle; the Paris Commune by the Resistance to Prussian aggression; the Bolshevik Revolution drew great strength from the liberation struggles of the Poles, Finns, Georgians, Ukranians and others; the Chinese Revolution was a result of the national liberation war against Japan, just as the Albanian Revolution was a result of the national liberation war against Italy, and the U.S. Black rebellions of the sixties were inspired by the national liberation struggles in Vietnam and Africa. The most intense practical activity of Marx's career as a revolutionary was his struggle to line up the English workers in

support of the war against slavery being fought in the U.S. Lenin fought mightily to get the Russian trade-union movement to transfer its vision from economic struggles to political struggles, in particular to support the national liberation struggles. No, Mr. Rosen, in terms of "class significance" the support of the war of liberation in Cambodia was more important than the Postal Strike. Thus the Rosen-inspired student internal combined gross sectarianism with significant right-wing revisionism.

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The retreat from the student movement became a rout. The school year 1970-71 found PL more isolated on campus than at any time in its history. And if that bothered some, the leadership had the answer: the students didn't work hard enough developing the CWSA. As for SDS it died in all but name during the next school year. On-campus chapters ceased to exist except as PL and friends groupings and even this was restricted to no more than 10 colleges. SDS went from 304 chapters to 10 in 18 months of PL stewardship. But the NSC by December, 1970 even dropped the CWSA or WSA or any pretense at all of student work. PL student members spent long hours selling Challenge at plant gates or unemployment offices or organizing among unemployed or welfare recipients for the 1971 unemployment marches. The PL involvement in the student movement was ended by the close of 1970. Leonhardt and other student leaders of the CWSA period were shifted to other work in that winter and only the most inexperienced, less-thought-of cadre were left in student work.76

#### CHAPTER 5

#### RETREAT FROM THE TRADE-UNION MOVEMENT 1969-1971

PLP's original concept of participation in the trade-union movement was exactly borrowed from the Communist Party (CP). This meant slow clandestine work in union committees and in alliance with supposedly progressive union leaders like Harry Bridges of the ILWU, Leon Davis of the 1199 and Dave Livingston of District 65 in New York. All of the PLM's trade-union cadre were ex-CP'ers, white and mostly middle aged, in their forties and older. They were not inclined to any bold moves, were not in basic industry and were generally not together in a concentration. The one exception was a small group of New York City railroad workers, led by Wally Linder. However, when he was laid off in 1963 the base and membership of PL in railroads dried up and Linder became a full-time PL functionary, "the trade-union organizer." Generally this not impressive trade union base\* was either dying out (literally) or quitting by 1965. When Lydergraf and Coe quit in late 1966 they took better than one-third of the trade-union cadre with them.

At some point it became clear to Rosen and Linder that genuine communist work in the trade-unions was impossible with the base inherited from the CP. Thus the NSC began pushing the students and the younger full-timers to get a job and do trade-union work. (There had been 20 full-time organizers for a membership of less than 200 in 1965, but with little money for full-timers, PL made a virtue out of necessity.) Eddie Lemansky, organizational secretary for PL, and Steve Martinot, organizer of the Cuba trips, got jobs in New York City's garment center; Steve Cherkoss, West-Coast student organizer, got a job in a Los Angeles Steel plant. Dozens of other young PL activists followed suit going to work in industry.

The approach to "T-U" work (trade-union work) was generally correct in the period 1966-1969. Linder waged many a sharp struggle against the laziness or adventurism of the ex-student cadre. The PL T-U cadre was first of all instructed to be a good worker and win the respect of his co-workers, secondly a friend on all levels to his co-workers, thirdly a good union person, active with a solid trade-union attitude. (Thus in order to become more like the

<sup>\*</sup>Considering he was N.Y. State trade union organizer for the CP, Rosen did not take much with him into PLM.

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working class PL members shaved their beards and moustaches in 1966 and cut their hair short. PL members also after 1965 foreswore pot under penalty of expulsion. It is doubtful that short hair, no pot or clean shaves helped PL get close to the younger workers, but these moves showed the attitude of ex-students determined to become serious workers.) Within this context it was possible step-by-step to build rank and file caucuses and participate in union committees in sharper and sharper struggles against the boss. And eventually the right-wing union leaders would be more and more exposed as labor lieutenants for the captains of industry.

Inasmuch as alliances with more progressive trade-unionists and existing caucuses were not emphasized (but not outlawed in the period before 1969) progress was slow and defeats suffered by inexperienced cadre were to be expected. Depending how PL handled its defeats, whether the Party could dialectically separate the strengths from weaknesses, the work could grow or collapse. It collapsed after the defeat in the New York garment center.

The garment center became the number one PL trade-union concentration. PL used a two-prong strategy there: first slow base-building by cadre working within, and second, *Challenge* sales and rallies, addressed by mainly Epton and Linder, outside. The key strategy for the inside cadre was to get a whole shop to join the union en masse, under PL leadership. Outside *Challenge* ran a monthly column on the union contract provisions, which were in general being grossly violated, plus a story or two each issue about various shop struggles. It was a difficult strategy but it was the only road to success given the objective problems of the garment center: racism, gangsterism, low wages, transient work force, runaway shops, corruption.

Throughout 1967 the work in the garment center proceeded slowly, but steadily; little by little PLP made a name for itself. Then on October 23, PL led its first strike; some 40 workers at City-Wide Trucking, where Lemansky worked, went out for 3 hours until the boss gave in and allowed them to join the union and get union scale.

A similar action at Selman's also involving 40 workers was led by Steve Martinot on Nov. 1. In the aftermath PL forces fought hard as collusion between union and boss took away most of the gains and in January Martinot was dropped as shop steward by the union. Meanwhile *Challenge* sales reached a garment center record of 400 in December. The February, 1968 issue of *Challenge* had 4 pages devoted to the garment center as did the issue preceeding it. The on-the-job struggles continued at Selmans and City-Wide with the

union-boss — "impartial arbitrator" gang-up being too much for PL and the workers steadily lost the gains of the previous fall until Martinot was fired from Selman's on April 18. But the PLP leadership sent more cadre into the garment shops. Felipe Dejesus, editor of the Spanish section of *Challenge*, got a job at one of the biggest, Figure Flattery. There on August 15, 1968 Dejesus led PLP's biggest action yet, a 7 day successful strike that involved 800 workers. Throughout the long complicated struggle Dejesus, the steward, had to fight the union bosses as well as the cops who were brought in aggressively on the side of the boss. For the first time there were definite signs that other shops in the garment center were responding to PLP leadership and the 2-year old garment concentration was beginning to pay off.78

The powerful union-boss alliance was determined now to crush PLP in the garment center. First the gains of the Figure Flattery strike were eaten away slowly, four hundred were laid-off during the fall. But Dejesus and his Workers Alliance Committee were still strong. So the first overt move was made at City-Wide which fired Lemansky, PL's head of the garment center work, immediately after the union removed him as steward in mid-October; a half-day wildcat strike failed. Then on December 20 Dejesus was fired from Figure Flattery and arrested to boot. An 8-day slow-down with mainly student "solidarity picket line" failed to achieve anything and in late January, 1969 the Figure Flattery management let it be known that a purge of PL'ers was imminent. In the second half of 1968 the PL national leadership was growing impatient and the slightly less emphasis on patient base-building combined with the extremely difficult objective conditions led to defeat. PL tried to organize a strike in January with no success and PL's biggest base in the garment center was lost. PL still had a few forces left in the garment center but the spring of 1969 saw the work slowly peter out. Challenge sales and rallies at the garment center ceased, and after May 1969, nothing more was written in Challenge about the garment center. This was significant nationally because all PL'ers were looking to the garment concentration for direction, emphasis and tactics.79

The objective conditions at the garment center were so difficult that the committment implied in Mao's slogan "Try, fail, try again, fail again. . . until final victory" had to be mastered. Also PLP had to be able to learn from each loss carefully; this would have meant full democratic discussion by the membership and self-criticism by the leadership. But precisely this approach was beyond the capacity of the leadership who time and time again would launch a big

concentration, like garment in 1967 (or auto in 1973), but never stick it out past the initial defeats. In order to avoid the self-critical analysis "try again" implies the leadership moved on to another campaign or to another concentration. Thus the national trade-union concentration changed constantly: garment (1967-1968), General Electric (1969), General Motors (1970), unemployment (1971), 30 hours work for 40 hours pay (1972), auto (1973-1974), "on-the-job struggle 52 weeks a year" (1975), build trade-union chapters of CAR (Committee Against Racism) (1976). These rapid fire changes came after only one or two setbacks and the new line was put forward without even a look backwards or explanation as to why last year's line or concentration no longer applied.

With the collapse of the garment center concentration, real inside trade-union work began to be given slightly less emphasis within PL. Strike support by students was now given more importance than before and received much more emphasis in Challenge. This fit in well with PL's WSA strategy which was reaching a climax in SDS. PL organized significant student-worker solidarity picket lines in the 1969 period at the Herald-Examiner strike in Los Angeles, the Kaiser Hospital strike in San Francisco, the UPS strike in Chicago, the DuPont strike in New Jersey and elsewhere. But the 3-month nationwide General Electric strike in the winter of 1969-70 provided PLP with its best opportunity for strike support, and PL took full advantage organizing a demonstration of 8,000 at the Labor Dept. in Washington,\* putting out an 8-page special Challenge flyer and engaging in direct picket line support at Lynn, Mass; Newark, New Jersey: Cicero, III; Arkansas City, Kansas; Oakland and San Jose, California: Detroit and Edmore, Mich; Utica, Rochester and Syracuse, N.Y. SDS on-campus support was organized at U. of Chicago, UCLA, Princeton and at a host of Boston area colleges. Also food and money were collected. Out of it grew PL influence in at least two GE plants, Chicago and Lynn.

Meanwhile the Party put some time and effort in the sixties into developing a theoretical guide for T-U work. The first two PL trade-union programs (1963 and 1966) did not differ essentially from the CP trade-union program. Among the demands were such things as more trade with Russia, an independent "people's political party." The three main authors of the 1966 program were Coe, Van Lydergraf and Linder, and the program represented the type of work and outlook the ex-CP-trade-unionists brought into PLP. Obviously with a new generation of activists going into trade-union

work after mid-1966 to continue to have the old CP-style tradeunion program was an anachronism. But lack of leadership in the T-U section delayed any revisions until well into 1968. Thus for two crucial years the new PL T-U activists were guided theoretically by a program written in the main by the right-wingers, Coe and Lydergraf. And the pace of putting forth advanced ideas was unnecessarily slow. More important since the old T-U program did not highlight a strategy to organize workers around "U.S. Get Out of Vietnam" the PL trade-union work completely ignored the major issue in the country, the war. G.E. was castigated as a "warmaker and strikebreaker" by PL students, but in propaganda directed at GE workers the "warmaker" role of GE was omitted. PL tradeunion work even in its best period was flawed by ignoring the issue of Vietnam. Additionally the line and practice of fighting racism in the T-U work was relatively weak.

As part of the preparation for the PL Convention of 1968 a new draft of the T-U program was done up. But it was rejected as still too close in content to the Coe-Lydergraf program. Not until mid-1969 was the trade-union program completed, largely written by Linder. The new program ignored the war even more than the old program and downgraded the struggle for Black Liberation. But these flaws, while very serious, did not essentially take away from the essence of the program, which was quite positive. The guts of the program was a strategy for united front work in the shops, how this would develop step-by-step. The program was a fairly good up-to-date theoretical guide on how to avoid economism and reformism. The central point of PL's trade-union program was the caucus which would be a united front of forces opposed to the sell-out union leadership. Unity with class-oriented union leaders was not ruled out, where such existed. The Party would strive to build the left, expand the Center, isolate or neutralize the Right within the caucus. PL would do this by (1) raising the militancy of the shop struggles, (2) expanding the range of issues, (3) fighting racism and otherwise upholding the unity of the working class, (4) expanding the caucus' influence to other locals geographically and to other unions in the same city with a view toward united action. (5) putting forward the need for socialism, the dictatorship of the proletariat and recruiting to PLP, (6) exposing the class role of the state and the labor lieutenants. It was basically a Marxist-Leninist program based on Lenin's What is To Be Done and Left-Wing Communism.

But the NSC was more influenced by the defeat in the garment center than by the long labored-over program of Linder. Thus by the time the Party developed a good theoretical basis for T-U's

<sup>\*</sup>This was a break-away from an anti-war rally of 500,000.

work the NSC was ready to sound the call for retreat.

PL was in a fairly good position by mid-1969 to do T-U work. The theoretical basis was laid out and as the students were leaving student work in a steady stream, encouraged by the retreat from student work already underway, a new generation of cadre for work in the factories was available. Finally in the East, Chicago and on the West Coast penetration was finally begun at some of the main basic industrial plants. General Electric at Lynn, Mass., Ford at Mahwah, N.J., the JFK Airport in New York, several big New York City Hospitals, Inland Steel at Gary, Ford and Hotpoint at Chicago and the Chicago Transit Authority, GM in Detroit, Ford and GM at San Jose, the Phone Co. in San Francisco, GM and Bethlehem Steel in Los Angeles all had been penetrated by small groups of serious PLP cadre by the winter of 1969-70. Most of these were students excessed off the campus by the retreats of that year, but they eagerly followed the detailed directions of PL's energetic T-U "expert," Wally Linder; his advice was generally sound, even if a trifle conservative. The T-U program gave a reasonably good basis for building caucuses and Linder filled in the gaps with practical advice. Caucuses and/or formations of one kind or another were slowly being rooted at most of these key industrial plants when the retreat sounded here just as it had thrice earlier when PL had seemed on the verge of breakthroughs in the anti-war movements, the BLM and the student movement.

The movement to retreat from the trade-union movement was given the name "rectification," or "redeployment." Unlike the earlier retreats neither specific attacks on potential allies nor a theoretical basis for the retreat was developed. However, racism played a role in that the white middle class students were being told they could "not relate" to minority workers.80 The rectification called for the ex-students to leave the factories.

It was hedged with a lot of ifs, ands, or buts but the net result was only that ex-students were encouraged to leave the factories. Colonizing, of course, is not the best way to build a factory base. The best way is to work with the genuine leaders of the working class at the shop or higher level. However, since PLP, fearing the power of revisionism, never trusted leaders other than themselves, sending organizers into the factory was the next best thing and could have led to some success of the Party had persisted and not abandoned the project after the series of reversals in the garment center. Rectification began to deprive PL of most of its factory cadre and thus was essentially a turn away from the T-U movement.

Outside strike support or paper sales is a third - and the least

desireable — method of factory penetration. This won't work unless there are people inside, either genuine workers' leaders in a united front with the Party and/or organizers sent in (ex-students are as good as any). Paper sales will have no relevance nor will a stable readership develop without a base inside. Strike support will accomplish little without a previously established presence in the smaller class battles that rage daily in the workplace. Rectification meant in essence relying solely on paper sales and strike support to penetrate and lead the T-U movement. This one-sided reliance resulted in PL's total isolation from the T-U movement within the year.

Still the movement out of T-U work was slow and fitful; many PL cadre elected to remain in the factories on one excuse or another. Moreover, a number of students went to work anyway, some forced by necessity; others by attraction to the "front-lines" of PL's work. And rectification was not uniformly enforced nationwide.81 T-U work even expanded slightly in places like General Electric in Lynn and a relatively large number of PL'ers with working class origins were exempted, at least initially from being rectified out of T-U work. Therefore there was still some trade-union activity in this period. Trade-union work was, however, finally ended during "Challenge Summer" 1970.

The three previous summers had seen "work-ins" of students in the factories, in 1967 to win workers against the war, in 1968 and 1969 to build the WSA within SDS. At the end of these "work-ins" a number of students each year remained in the factories to do T-U work for PLP. Since PL rarely recruited a worker direct from the factories, this steady supply of students remaining in the factories became essential for the maintenance of T-U work. In 1970 there was to be no "work-in." Since the war, as far as PL was concerned, was a non-issue, and the WSA was no longer needed as a weapon against the RYM forces of SDS, the "work-in" no longer served PL's purposes. Moreover, it was contrary to rectification and the general line of retreat from the trade-union movement. Instead 1970 was declared "Challenge Summer."

The goal was to make *Challenge* into a mass paper. The method was to use every available PL member\* and friend to spend hours a day hawking *Challenges*.82 The outcome was to destroy all the PL trade-union work and what little remained of the student work by that time.

\*Milt Rosen, Wally Linder and Mort Scheer were exempted from selling CHALLENGE in public, on the grounds that it might be dangerous to their particular safety.

in "Challenge Summer."

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What "Challenge Summer" succeeded in doing was nipping in the bud PL's trade-union work. On a theoretical level the line was developed that workers could be won directly to communism without going through the stages and steps outlined in the T-U program:

"One of the big mistakes we made was to perpetuate the old C.P. notion of sending students to work in industry. We thought it was only their revisionist politics that made a shambles of the "colonization" plan, and that since PL's line was correct our students in industry were guaranteed success. But we had made only a superficial analysis of the problem.

"In the first place the transformation of students to factory workers under capitalism is an enormous job. And we underestimated changing objective conditions in the country. Workers in large numbers were responding to a communist line. Thus we were left, in this increasingly favorable situation, with only the efforts of students newly entered in the working class. In addition, typical student arrogance showed itself in the belief that workers wouldn't move unless students joined them at the "point of production." These obstacles limited integration with workers and limited winning workers to the party.

"But another phenomenon occured: The circulation of Challenge-Desafio, PL's national newspaper, rose in two years from 5,000 to 50,000 and is still rising. The increase in circulation is primarily at factories, usually trustified sections of big industry. So we believe an historic trend is taking place. The advanced class-conscious workers, of whom Lenin spoke, are becoming evident...

"When workers bring PL literature and organization to work the class struggle is at a new stage."

(PL, V.7, No. 5, June 5, 1970)

Thus a year after its publication the long-awaited for T-U program became a dead letter. No need to build caucuses or struggle within the unions; just get the workers to buy a *Challenge*, visit them, get them to sell *Challenges* themselves and presto, instant communists. No need to struggle against the boss or the reactionary union leaders, just sell *Challenge*.

Thus PL cadre in the factories were no longer given leadership on in-the-job struggles or work in the unions. All they had to do was sell *Challenges*. Building sellers collectives was supposed to replace building formations to lead the class struggle at the point of production. The leadership consciously ignored questions arising from the on-the-job class struggle and just struggled with members to sell, sell and sell.

Challenge, a monthly in 1970\*, had a circulation of little more than 2,000. The mass selling campaign of the summer achieved seemingly spectacular results: 65,000 of the May issue (sold in June), 90,000 of the June issue and up to 100,000 for the August issue. And by August 24 Challenge was converted into a tri-weekly and then a year later became a bi-weekly (August of 1971). However the achievement in essence was less than the figures blared in Challenge indicated. For one thing there was widespread fudging of the totals on every level because of the intense competitive pressure. The leadership introduced competition between areas and within the areas; lists were published of the totals of each seller. There were roses for the best sellers (and never a doubt expressed no matter how improbably inflated a figure might be) and intense, unpleasant struggle sessions for the laggards.

Enthusiasm can't be denied. However, high-powered sales pressure and enthusiasm couldn't maintain the workers' interest in a poorly written paper not in their interests.† In San Francisco, for example, more than 100 papers were sold by half a dozen enthusiastic sellers at United Air Lines Maintenance for the first time. The next month 15 sellers showed up but sales dropped off due to the workers' indifference toward the paper. Moreover there were threats from various anti-communists. Demoralization set in; fewer showed up to sell the following month. Sales fell to only 2 or 3 papers within four months. This type of thing was exactly repeated nationally in almost every industrial sales point.83

By mid-1971 sales were down to 30,000 for the bi-weekly (a 40% drop). Despite periodic high pressure sales campaigns, sales levels continually declined and by 1976 the NC was claiming only 10,000 on a weekly issue, although the real, actual sales of *Challenge*, including subscriptions numbered no more than 5,000†† a drop of 80% from the "Challenge Summer." One of the goals of the *Challenge* Summer was the establishment of reading and discussion groups around the paper. This never happened because of the lack of political discussion in the Party at the time and the low level of politics in the paper itself. The NSC was not critical of this particular failure but lambasted most PL students for not selling 20 hours

\*It started as a weekly in 1964, fell to a bi-weekly in 1965, drifted to a monthly in late 1966.

tSee Appendix.

11This is the most generous estimate, a less generous estimate would be 2,000 per week. Not too good when you consider the leadership considers CHALLENGE selling the most important activity of a PL member.

In fact during "Challenge Summer" it didn't even matter where they sold. A phone company worker would be found selling at the unemployment office, an electrical worker at the bus barns, etc. With the many hours required selling *Challenge* off-the-job time alone made it impossible for the factory cadre to pursue tradeunion work. But the theory that workers *en masse* could be won directly to communism if only more *Challenges* were sold provided the theoretical justification for dropping T-U work. Trade union work dried up and died completely in the summer and fall of 1970. The retreat was completed in the spring of 1971 with PL's new theory, new practice and new organizational measures.

The theory was developed that a communist could not participate in union leadership even as a shop steward without selling out his principles. It was inherently reactionary to be a union official or shop steward. Communists on the job had to attack and expose, not the boss primarily, but the union and this meant first and foremost the shop steward.85

The theory was apparently confirmed by PL's experiences in the auto strike of late 1970. The United Auto Workers (UAW) has perhaps the most highly organized machine of any union. Though the UAW is outwardly more democratic than other unions, it is difficult in practice for serious opponents of the machine to be elected even committeemen (shop stewards). Thus practically all the shop stewards of the UAW are very loyal to the UAW heirachy at least when faced with an outside threat to the UAW leadership. And PLP in late 1970 put itself forward very stridently as indeed such a threat to the UAW leadership. PL, having very little inside cadre in auto, organized strike support by collecting food and money, trying to join picket lines and organizing marches upon the dealerships in the cities. As early as May 22 an internal bulletin said that UAW strike support would "Be the single most important activity in the next six to nine months."86 A national commission was set up which sent out much preparatory material and organized in Chicago to prepare to aid the strike. The aid to the General Motors workers was accompanied with a heavy dose of brickbats for the UAW leadership. Because of this PL's aid was received cooly in Los Angeles, Massachusetts, and San Jose, and often it was rejected outright by union officials at all levels. The committeemen did not rally to PL but, if not openly anti-PL themselves, stayed in the background when PL was attacked. The rank and file was appealed to, but the local leadership had such influence as to prevent PL from making any, but the most temporary inroads.

In fact it is not during a strike that communists gain leadership.

but in the lulls preceeding strikes. Here during the "quiet periods" rage a thousand class battles and it is in these thousand class struggles between strikes that leadership and alliances are forged that construct the scenario that obtains during the strike. If it were not for the fact that the need for long-term basebuilding was written up in the T-U program the PL leadership could simply be accused of naivete for thinking PLP could appear out of nowhere during the auto strike and win over the workers immediately by a dazzling display of aid. But there was no self-criticism from the NSC and many PL'ers were left feeling that shop stewards were as bad as international presidents.

The bad taste that unions left in the mouths of PL'ers in late 1970 stayed on through 1971. This led to the then current conventional wisdom in PL that unions were at best obstacles in PL's mission to win the workers directly to communism. The economic crisis of that period and the layoffs gave PL the opportunity to ignore organized workers altogether and to concentrate on the unemployed.

In the practical work all efforts were geared to the unemployed in the winter of 1970-1971. PLP called for two big marches for jobs on March 27, 1971 in Washington D.C. and Sacramento, Calif. Given the unemployment crisis of that winter this call was entirely justified. However, PL's unionized workers were now put in "jobs committees" that ostensibly sponsored the marches. These committees were actually run by the PL leadership directly and while some unemployed workers or welfare recipients were briefly brought around the party, the more permanent effect was to keep PLP worker cadre from organizing where they worked. Thus, on their days off PL industrial cadre could be found at the unemployment centers or housing projects rather than at the union halls or homes of their fellow workers. The marches were a relatively big success; 1,500 marched in Sacramento, 5,000 in Washington D.C. but since no united front was organized around the issue the succeeding marches grew progressively smaller until June when only 500 total in a dozen cities marched under PL leadership. Meanwhile T-U work had totally ceased.

What passed for on-the-job work in 1971 is illustrative of how extreme sectarianism often leads to anarchism. Anarchistic exemplary actions, which invariably led to the rapid firing of the PL cadre became the rule for "on-the-job organizing." Usually after a few months on the job, the full-time PL area leader would ask the PL worker what had been done to "step up the level of struggle" or something on that order. An anarchist "exemplary" action followed

and in close order another PL'er had plenty of time on his hands for work among the unemployed. Some 20 PL cadre at the phone company in San Francisco lost their jobs in this manner by mid-1971.87

A typical example occurred in early 1971 at Metropolitan Life-Insurance Co., one of the biggest employers in San Francisco. After three or four months on the job a PL'er was told by her club to do something on the job. She passed out a leaflet during work hours proclaiming her communist beliefs. The next day she was told she was fired and to leave. She refused to leave and instead got up on a desk top and made a speech. The guards came: She fought them but was at length ejected. Naturally this brave but basically nutty action received no support from the other workers, who instead must have had their belief about the weirdness of communists reinforced.88 This type of action was repeated in slightly different form all over the country dozens of times in late 1970, early 1971. Although common enough these actions were not official policy and generally were not reported in Challenge. Yet PL's self-isolating line of retreat from the T-U movement had led directly to these. The NSC seemed to see how harmful these actions were but was powerless to stop them without re-entering T-U work. (In 1972 a serious attempt at organizing non-union Met Life began after the local PL leadership faced and corrected some of the most blatant sectarian errors. The workers were largely won by PL cadre to the union, but here too the organizing drive floundered in the end because of lack of a serious united front approach toward the union leadership.)

Organizational steps were taken in the Spring of 1971 to see that no T-U work could be done. All T-U concentration clubs, even the Teachers' Clubs were broken up. The Union PL'ers were dispersed to community clubs, to unemployment clubs, to clubs that concentrated on selling at certain areas. In the teachers' work the trade-unions were scorned as reactionary. It reached such a point that in the 1971 San Francisco teachers strike some PL teachers crossed the picket lines and scabbed because the strike was "only for economic demands, had no educational demands, and was therefore 'racist'."

Thus by the June, 1971 NC meeting there were no PL'ers involved in the T-U movement at any level, nor were there even T-U concentration clubs. Moreover *Challenge* selling was off by 50% from the previous summer and the unemployment campaign was in the doldrums; the June PL marches had been a big flop and no serious jobs committees involving non-PL forces had been established. This was the

situation in the Party when the Party's general political line "Road to Revolution III" was issued.

## "ROAD TO REVOLUTION III"

The founders of PLP broke with the CP over the questions associated with modern revisionism; i.e. how the CP revised Marxism-Leninism in order to make itself more acceptable to the U.S. ruling class. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) broke with the Soviet CP over the same question, the Sino-Soviet dispute, which dominated the politics of the sixties, inspired the founding of PLP, nurtured it, and guaranteed its growth. The CCP declared "Our position on revisionism is simple: one, we are against it, two, we are not afraid of it." The PLP leadership learned only the first half of this slogan. They soon learned to fear revisionism even more than they hated it. The dangers of revisionism were real enough. The tragic events of Indonesia were a case in point. Closer to home was the sad degeneration of the CPUSA. PLP observed the phenomenon of revisionism in all its evil and began to fear its contagion. PL'ers went to such lengths to separate themselves from revisionism that they were too far removed from the struggle to do battle with revisionism.

PLP withdrew from the anti-war committees because these were dominated by revisionists. And PLP began to see "revisionists" in Vietnam as a greater evil than the U.S. aggressors. "Everyone can see how bad the U.S. is," they mistakenly argued "but our job is to expose the enemy within." The concentrated PL attack on the Vietnamese, the anti-war committees, all liberal opponents of the war, even though the criticisms were sometimes correct, though often not, led inexorably to PL's withdrawal from the anti-war movement: The withdrawal was not inevitable. By trying to defend an incorrect line in the midst of mass movements the Party could have learned to correct its errors. The PL leadership refused to put its politics to such a test. It was, on the one hand, over-confident of the correctness of its line, and on the other hand, feared that a member would fall prey to what it considered "revisionism," that is not putting primary value on the attack on the Vietnamese. Fear and overestimation of revisionism led to retreat from the mass antiwar movement.

In the early sixties PLP developed a line supporting "revolutionary nationalism;" this seemed more left than the CP which considered any Black movement to the left of M.L. King as "ultra-left." How-

ever, in essence the line of "revolutionary nationalism" was in contradiction to the Marxist slogan of "Workers of all countries, Unite." PL's alliances with "revolutionary nationalists" like LeRoi Jones never developed, however, and PL soon reconsidered its position. Correct criticism of nationalists gave way to hatred and hatred to overriding fear. And fear of nationalism led PL to blast the student Black Liberation Movement, which was led at least in part by nationists, and to downgrade the importance of the Black rebellions after 1966, which PL suspected may have been infiltrated by nationalists. Finally came the shameful attacks on the BPP and PLP's own Harlem club, for suspected nationalist deviations. Fear and overestimation, of Black nationalism led to retreat from the mass BLM.

The student movement of the sixties was based on support of the anti-war movement and the BLM. When the student movement could not be won to PL's fear of revisionist domination of the anti-war movement and nationalist domination of the BLM, PLP retreated from the mass student movement.

Finally fears arose about revisionism within the PLP and how PL cadre might succumb to revisionism in the trade union movement. Thus it was necessary to eschew all ties with union leaders, even down to the shop steward level. PL members had to abandon union positions, and caucuses within the unions, engaging instead in anarchist exemplary actions in order to maintain the purity of their principles. Thus fears of revisionism developing within PLP led to retreat from the T-U movement.

"Road to Revolution III" sounded a theoretical justification for the four retreats, which up until then each had been justified in turn as another victory in Milt Rosen's solitary battle to "turn the Party toward the working class." The document was also the definitive break with the CCP, and developed out of the conviction that revisionism had swallowed up the CCP. Therefore we should briefly trace PL's relations with China before going into "Road to Revolution III" (RTR III) in more depth.

PL's relations with China were always one step short of fraternal. The Chinese subscribed to 2,000 copies of *Challenge* and invited leading PL figures to travel to China. In addition there were meetings with Chinese and Albanian representatives. But the CCP never reprinted any PL documents as they had done with their more closely fraternal parties, such as the ones in Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, Brazil, India. PL, however, was more or less the official Maoist organization in the U.S. during the period 1964-1969. As such, PLP gained the great prestige that came from being associated so closely with the CCP and Mao-Tse-Tung. And PLP circulated

the red-book of Mao's thoughts and PL's literature often abounded in quotations from Mao or stories reprinted from the Chinese press.

But there were irritations as early as 1967 when the PL leadership became privately upset that the CCP did not follow PL's anti-Vietnam line. At a 1967 NC discussion of the Cultural Revolution Rosen was critical of the Red Guard for breaking with democraticcentralism and suspicious of the leadership in China for not asserting greater authority in the Party. The CCP's repudiation of Liu-Shao-Chi's book, How to be a Good Communist was likewise received poorly since PLP had used the book extensively in internal study groups. The "Cult of Mao" was also criticized at this NC meeting, even though the PL V. 6, No. 4 was replete with ostentatious Mao quotations and the cult of Milt Rosen was flourishing in at least some quarters of PLP.89 The NC discussion missed the historical essence of the mighty class battles then being fought in China and amounted to unself-critical carping over the weaknesses. Yet the PL leadership was prepared to begin more serious criticism of China in 1968-1969, when they became more aware that the battle in China was for state power. Almost alone among U.S. left groups\* PLP was coming to the conclusion that the Chinese Left had lost, that Mao was fronting for the Right or at least the Right of Center and without really knowing anything about what was going on in China the PL leadership openly sympathized with the "anarchists" and the "ultra-left" that had, according to press reports, been put down militarily in certain Chinese provinces.

To make this kind of break for PLP would have required considerable courage had not the Chinese on their part displayed increasing coolness to PL in the 1968-1969 period. The CCP had never appreciated PLP's "making more profound" their line of drawing a clear line of demarcation with revisionism. When PL attacked the Vietnamese for negotiating and for accepting Soviet aid the CCP was not of a mind to follow suit. The CCP was intent on avoiding a break with Vietnam and found PL's escalating verbal abuse of the front-line fighters in Vietnam distasteful and helpful neither to China's relations with Vietnam nor to China's image as the bulwark of support for the national liberation movement. Nor did the Chinese ever see the point in PLP's abandonment of the anti-war movement and much to Rosen's irritation, they continued to hail the mass anti-war demonstrations even though they were led by PL's enemies. The CCP took much much the same tack with regard to PL's withdrawal from the BLM. This was symbolized by the

presence of PL's enemy, Robert Williams, in China even though PL had warned the CCP many times that he was probably an agent.90 Apparently the CCP was aware of PL's sectarian habits and didn't trust this cry of "wolf," even though true in this case.

But it was PL's insistence on the necessity to attack Vietnam for negotiating that the break with China came. In early 1969 two PL NSC members went to China and had an 8-hour meeting with a top Politburo member who at this meeting professed himself and the CCP in agreement with PL on all points except that of the negotiations in Vietnam. 91 The meeting was friendly but the PL'ers gamely pressed their point. Six months later in Paris PL representatives were told by Chinese diplomats in no uncertain terms: change the PL anti-Vietnam line, or else.92 In early 1970 a short shooting war broke out between China and the USSR. In a lengthy editorial Challenge lectured the CCP against negotiating with the USSR on this issue. The Chinese expressed no appreciation for PL's advice and were soon warning fraternal contacts to stay away from PLP.93 The once warm CCP-PLP relations became now totally hostile although the CCP never bothered to publically attack PLP; PLP was free to pursue its own road to international isolation. Inner-party discussions on the right-wing trend in China had begun in late 1969 and culminated at an expanded NC in December, 1970 that approved "Road to Revolution III," which had been authored mainly by Jake Rosen and Milt Rosen.

In a nutshell "Road to Revolution III" (RTR III) is a counterrevolutionary anarchist document which totally negates the concepts of the dictatorship of the proletariat and revolutionary strategy developed by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. In RTR III PLP was so bold as to declare that they were correcting Marxism-Leninism (M-L) and they declared specifically where and what ways Marx and Lenin and Stalin erred. When criticized that this was revisionism, PLP immodestly declared that they were developing Marxism-Leninism just as Lenin developed Marxism and Stalin and Mao developed Marxism-Leninism. Of course most major opponents of Marxism from Kautsky to Khrushchev said the same thing as PLP. Now its true that Engles, Lenin, and Stalin added and developed a great deal to the theory of Marx. But they never REVISED Marxism. They built upon the foundation Marx bequeathed them. Never in the writings of these three is there a statement that they were changing anything of Marx, because they kept the foundations intact. The method of these men was to develop Marxism by highlighting aspects of Marx's theory and adding to it. The PLP method was to declare Marx, Engels, Lenin or Stalin wrong in this or that and then put

<sup>\*</sup>Save some "Leftist" Trotskyite sects.

forth a new utterly untested version. There was no respect for the 100 years of development of Marxism. Moreover, PL's "development" of Marxism-Leninism was never original but bore uncanny resemblence to the revisionists of an earlier time who had been fought by Marx, Engels, Lenin or Stalin.

RTR III attacks three key aspects of the Bolshevik strategy: the strategy of united front, the Bolshevik land program and the Bolshevik program on national minorities.

In the last case RTR III claims that Lenin made unnecessary concessions to nationalism:

"As we have shown above, he held the view that the free, "democratic" development of capitalism in countries where such struggles took place represented the essential first stage on the road to socialism. Nowhere in the world, however, has a fight for more or "better" capitalism led either directly or indirectly to socialism. What difference does it make to workers and peasants that their oppressors call themselves capitalists or "communists" if a national "liberation" movement can achieve liberation only for local bosses?"

"Another problem with Lenin's strategy is that it presupposes an impotent, deaf-dumb-blind and stupid national bourgeoisie (and a perpetually sleeping imperialism.)"95

The false content of this charge was largely dealt with above.\* This aspect of the RTR III line had been operating in PLP for some time and provided the theoretical justification for the retreats from the anti-war movement and the BLM. RTR III merely logically carries this one step further and blames Lenin as well as the Vietnamese and supporters of the BLM. In the sixties socialism was set back in Indonesia, Cuba, Algeria, Vietnam and elsewhere.

RTR III sees that the problem was a sell-out by the local national bourgeosie. There is some truth here, but to abstain from these struggles would have only confirmed the national bourgeois leadership of these wars and would have put the communists in objective alliance with imperialism (which is what happened to the French CP in Algeria.) PL's line of attacking national liberation leads to social-patriotism† and conforms most closely to the wishes of the imperialist bosses. The truth, as Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia, S. Yemen, Algeria, Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau convincingly prove today, is that national libera-

tion does provide a dramatic and sharp improvement in the lives of the workers and peasants and if communists want to go further toward socialism they have to have been involved in the struggle for national liberation. This is scientific socialism that deals with the real world. Only utopian socialists pretend to see no difference in the workers' standard of living between Batista's Cuba or Castro's Cuba, Portuguese Angola or the Angola of the MPLA, French Algeria or independent Algeria, Thieu's Vietnam or the Vietnam of today. Yet that is the exact meaning of the PLP statement that it makes no difference "to workers and peasants that their oppressors call themselves capitalists or 'communists'." Only communists who support the national liberation struggle 100% will have footing among the people to go on to the fight for socialism.

It is the utopian socialists who are "impotent, deaf-dumb-blind and stupid." Even with their limited outlook the national bourgeoisie can see what the utopians cannot. The national bourgeoisie knows it has to make concessions to the working class in order to unite with them in common struggle against imperialism. Important reforms are conceeded to the workers in the course of struggle. This does not negate the inevitable class struggle between the national bourgeoise and the workers. It merely demonstrates that temporarily, and under certain conditions, the struggle of the people of an oppressed nation versus imperialism takes precedence over the struggle of the workers versus the national bourgeoisie. As for imperialism the communist strategy does not assume perpetual sleep, but on the contrary assumes that against an awake, alert imperialism all forces that can be united must be mobilized.

On the land question RTR III says the peasants should have been won to socialism directly and opposed the Bolshevik strategy of dividing the land up among the peasants:

"Despite the fact that all social-democrats considered that large scale farming was a necessary part of socialism and that Lenin repeatedly argued that dividing up the land was only 'the most consistent clearing of the way for capitalism' and the 'strivings of the most radical of the bourgeoisie,' the Bolshevik revolution based itself precisely on this division. . . The result of all this was that never were the Bolsheviks able to introduce the Paris Commune type state they desired to introduce. How could they when the peasants were not committed to socialism? . . .

"The reason for this abandonment of the country-side was a mechanical, deterministic one. As Lenin put it, the peasants neither need nor desire the abolition of capitalism. Capitalism is to the peasant what socialism is to the proletarian. This is all wrong.

"First, why is the proletarian the "only consistently revolutionary

<sup>\*</sup>See above Chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>†</sup>Socialism in words, patriotism in essence.

class?' According to Marx it is because, whether or not he realizes it, his social problems cannot be solved short of socialism. Does not history prove that this is also true for the peasant? The experience of every single land reform without exception proves that the peasant cannot overcome his social problems short of the collectivization of the land, which is to say socialism.96"

The land question is not as important today as it was formerly because the semi-feudal big estates are becoming imperialist factories in the fields. But for the Bolsheviks solving the land question was crucial. It was the only way to survive the Civil War. The destruction of the Russian feudal aristocracy and capitalist landed gentry was best achieved by dividing the land among the peasants. It was important in itself to destroy the material base of the enemy classes. But in addition the Bolsheviks gained a footing among the peasants precisely by means of their land policy, which they put to even better use later in leading a mass movement among the peasants to collectivize the farms. RTR III's analysis that dividing up the land led only to the growth of capitalist consciousness among the peasants is belied by the historic collectivization movement which followed within ten years. The truth is that by leading the land reform movement the Bolsheviks gained political credit as well as peasant cadre. These circumstances made it materially possible to begin the political struggle to win the poor and middle peasants to socialism. This political struggle bore fruit with the collectivization.

In this last quote RTR III directly contradicts the *Communist Manifesto* which states that the proletariat is the only revolutionary class because: "The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of Modern Industry: the proletariat is its special and essential product." RTR III, on the other hand, says that the proletariat is the only revolutionary class because its problems can only be solved under socialism and says this should be true for peasants too. Here RTR III openly replaces Marx's SCIENTIFIC, OBJECTIVE statement with a subjective idealist statement and is the clearest possible sign of PLP's departure from scientific socialism to pre-Marxian *Utopian socialism*. Marx's clear-cut statement tells us why Marxists have always treated the workers and peasants from different perspectives and why these two classes must be approached with different programs — one class is the most essential product of capitalism, the other is dying out under capitalism.

The thinking behind the RTR III attack on the Bolshevik United Front Policy had been current within PLP since the retreat from the Trade-Union Movement. But by crystalizing their anarchist

thinking the PL leadership locked themselves into a permanent nowin strategy. Referring to the Bolsheviks RTR III says:

"In the course of conducting revolutionary struggle, prior to the seizure of power, the revolutionary party makes a wrong analysis of the bourgeoisie, falsely divides the bourgeoisie into a 'left' and a 'right' camp, calls for an alliance with the 'left,' certain privileges, such as immunity from expropriation, etc.

"This alliance is maintained after the revolution, and the privileges granted to the 'good' wing of the bourgeoisie are expanded. The rationale is that the party and the masses are too weak politically, economically, administratively, and ideologically for the revolution to survive without the active collaboration of 'friendly' bourgeois forces. . .

"Revolutionaries view the united front exclusively or primarily as an alliance between themselves and the 'better' section of the bourgeoisie. Thus, the front unites around a bourgeois-nationalist line as opposed to a revolutionary line for the dictatorship of the workers. As part of this deal, communists make the biggest concession of all by renouncing the struggle to win the masses to a socialist program."97

Of course PL's interpretation of Lenin's "rationale" had nothing in common with what Lenin actually said:

"To carry on a war for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie, a war which is a hundred times more difficult, protracted and complex than the most stubborn of ordinary wars between states, and to renounce in advance any change of tack, or any utilization of a conflict of interests (even if temporary) among one's enemies, or any conciliation or compromise with possible allies (even if they are temporary, unstable, vacillating or conditional allies) — is that not ridiculous in the extreme? Is it not like making a difficult ascent of an unexplored and hitherto inaccessible mountain and refusing in advance ever to move in zigzags, ever to retrace one's steps, or ever to abandon a course once selected, and to try others? And yet people so immature and inexperienced (if youth were the explanation it would not be so bad; young people are preordained to talk such nonsense for a certain period) have met with support — whether direct or indirect, open or covert, whole or partial, it does not matter — from some members of the Communist Party of Holland.

"After the first socialist revolution of the proletariat, and the overthrow of the bourgeoisie in some country, the proletariat of that country remains for a long time weaker than the bourgeoisie, simply because of the latter's extensive international links, and also because of the spontaneous and continuous restoration and regeneration of capitalism and the bourgeoisie by the small commodity producers of the country which has overthrown the bourgeoisie. The more powerful enemy can be vanquished only by exerting the utmost effort, and by the most thorough, careful, attentive, skillful and obligatory use of any, even the smallest, rift between the enemies, any conflict of interests among the bourgeoisie of the various countries and among the various groups or types of bourgeoisie within the various countries, and also by taking advantage of any, even the smallest opportunity of winning a mass ally, even though this ally is temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable and conditional. Those who do not understand this reveal a failure to understand even the smallest grain of Marxism, of modern scientific socialism in general. Those who have not proved in practice, over a fairly considerable period of time and in fairly varied political situations, their ability to apply this truth in practice have not yet learned to help the revolutionary class in its struggle to emancipate all toiling humanity from the exploiters. And this applies equally to the period before and after the proletariat has won political power."98

The RTR III quotations around "'left' bourgeoisie" or "'better' bourgeoisie" are dishonest since neither Lenin or the Bolsheviks ever used those terms. The real question is how the proletarian Party takes advantage of the complex revolutionary situation when many Parties are in the field.

The mass line changes and the united front around the mass line changes with changing objective conditions. The Bolsheviks never put aside the goal of proletarian state power. During the revolutionary year of 1917 the mass line changed frequently but the Bolsheviks were always mindful of their destiny to head the proletarian dictatorship. This was their dual responsibility, which they fulfilled. Thus while, on the one hand, the Bolsheviks put forward the mass line, "Bread, Land and Peace" at the very same time Lenin wrote State and Revolution which was the clearest Marxist exposition of the concepts of the dictatorship of the proletariat. How was this "renouncing the struggle to win the masses to a socialist program." Only single-minded anarchists cannot understand that a communist Party can and MUST do both these things at once. Anarchists are only capable of simple sloganeering and are not able to think of gaining leadership of the workers' mass movement, which necessarily involves mass reform demands as well as complex and changing alliances. Nor are they capable of a scientific exposition of the dictatorship of proletariat, such as State and Revolution. The anarchists renounce "the struggle to win the masses to a socialist program," because their sectarian purist strategy necessitates that they keep themselves so distant from the masses and so far from the *center* of the struggle for power.

There were quite a number of anarchists, considerably more numerous and more capable than PLP, in the field in Russia in 1917. They had the RTR III line, or better: RTR III has rediscovered

their line. The question the authors of RTR III should have pondered is what became of the Russian anarchists? Why did they prove themselves so irrelevant to the masses during the Revolution of 1917?

Naturally if the Bolsheviks seized power by means of "renouncing the struggle to win the masses to a socialist program" or as Milt Rosen put it in the discussion around RTR III "Revisionism begins begins with the seizure of power,"99 things could only go from, bad to worse. RTR III continues its analysis with the familiar anarchist attack on the New Economic Policy (NEP) of Lenin:

"The Soviet party repeatedly contended that without the NEP, the economy — and hence socialism — were doomed. But the real failure began to materialize when communists were placed in the impossibly contradictory position of building capitalism. Profits and therefore exploitation were allowed. High living was tolerated. The equalitarianism that Lenin had admired in the Paris Commune and that he had called an indispensible aspect of socialism in **State and Revolution** never truly came into being. A well-heeled bourgeoisie with a toehold in the state apparatus and economy could not fail to begin penetrating the party, if not bodily at first, at least ideologically."100

Aside from the slanders about "high living" the implication here is: better to let the economy collapse than take the admittedly backward step that NEP implied. In the discussions around RTR III it was actually stated that it would have been better to let the people starve than introduce NEP.101 In this statement the leadership of PLP conceeded the economic necessity for NEP. But could the Bolsheviks or any Party have retained state power in the midst of collapse and starvation without trying wholeheartedly to reverse the economic catastrophe? Impossible!! It has never happened and never will. Thus the political necessity of NEP follows if the goal is to retain workers' power. This is not the goal of those who believe that "revisionism starts with the seizure of power." The Bolsheviks. however, knew that by retaining their hold on the dictatorship even while retreating they, at least, had a chance of containing the bourgeois penetration and reversing it in time. This is precisely what occurred. And later the historical responsibility fell to Stalin to end the Bolshevik retreat around NEP when material conditions permitted, to recapture the positions the bourgeoisie had won and to lead the successful struggle to build socialism in the USSR.

But RTR III ignores this historic struggle and borrows heavily from the rusty Trotskyite arsenal to attack Stalin:

"Over the years Stalin leadership committed wholesale errors:

- 1. Making concessions to the old Russian ruling class.
- 2. Introduction of material incentives instead of political-moral incentives.
- 3. Relying on nationalism to defeat the Nazis thus making the policy of the international working class subservient to the interests of the Soviet Union. So, nationalism triumphed over internationalism.
- 4. This policy lead the Soviets into alliances with the international ruling class. This was most evident during the war against the Nazis. U.S., British, some French and other bosses were pictured as progressive forces.
- 5. Democratic centralism, which is the only system of revolutionary organization, was reduced to arbitrary centralism. Friends were not distinguished from enemies. Thus, many good revolutionaries were killed by the Stalin leadership because they might have had differences. Many counter-revolutionaries who should have been put down were able to slip through because of these abuses.
- 6. Probably the most important error Stalin and others made was not winning masses of people to Marxism-Leninism. So an elite held power without much participation by workers and peasants. Socialism was for the party leaders. The masses were only involved in carrying out this or that policy."102

Let's look at this "gem" point-by-point:

Point One: "Making concessions to the old Russian ruling class." There is a hasty sloppiness in this formulation. The old Russian ruling class, the nobility and the big capitalists, as well as their political representatives from Miliyukov to Kerensky, were physically liquidated or driven into exile, never to return. Concessions were made to the petty-bourgeoisie, the rich peasants, the small traders and the small manufacturers, as well as engineers, managers, administrators, officers, teachers and the like. This class was never part of the old ruling structure in Tzarist Russia and in the main sided with the working class as against the counter-revolution during the Civil War.

If the help of this middle sector was useful in the Civil War it was absolutely essential in the period of economic reconstruction. Furthermore, the stringent measures of the war-time period could not continue in peace-time. Concessions were necessary in the NEP period to gain the cooperation of this middle section in order to avoid famine. The concessions were ended once the economy was functioning again and the threat of starvation passed.

Point Two: Once again sloppy formulations in RTR III's unseemly haste to attack the Bolsheviks. Neither Stalin nor Lenin introduced material incentives. These were a product of the capital-

ist era and, indeed, were present since the dawn of commodity production. For better than 1,000 years the Russian people were acquainted with material incentives. Lenin and Stalin's task was to lay the basis for ending this historical dependence. If the anarchists were capable of looking at history in a materialist fashion they would understand the difficulties and complexity in abolishing economic relations that took more than 1,000 years to develop.

But anarchists are idealists. They believe it was in the capacity of a man like Stalin to abolish all at once with a stroke of the pen material incentives. Anarchists believe in wish fulfillment: Because material incentives were not abolished it had to be because Stalin "committed wholesale mistakes." It is not for the idealist to consider that perhaps objective conditions were not ripe.

In fact the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat, under Stalin's leadership, shows that political-moral incentives gained steady ground against material incentives during the whole period. At times, to be sure, depending on objective need, the Party relied on material incentives to get a particular job done, because building a modern economy and a productive capacity capable of eliminating scarcity is a pre-condition to 100% reliance on political incentives. Even so, the great leap forward in Soviet history, the collectivization movement, the Five-Year Plans, the Stakhanovite Movement, World War II were accomplished by mainly relying on the political understanding of the working class. In all these great battles an historically increasing reliance on political incentives as opposed to material incentives was clearly evident. And every visitor to the Soviet Union in the thirties testified to that fact.

That is why the statement that the USSR relied on "nationalism" to defeat the Nazis (Points Three and Four) has to rank as one of history's biggest lies. When the Nazis invaded the USSR they had all the advantages of manpower, tanks, airplanes, experienced military leadership, guns, supplies, technology and industrial backup. The Nazi advantage was between 2-1 and 8-1 in all categories. It was the morale of the Soviet soldier, Soviet partisan and Soviet worker that stopped the Nazi blitz and turned the tide. Was this higher morale due to the fact that the Russians were more nationalistic than the Germans? Even to pose the question is ludicrous. If nationalism was all that was involved in morale then the Germans would have won the war hands down. For in no nation was more highly developed than in Nazi Germany, nationalistic spirit.

The difference between the high Soviet morale and the lesser German morale was that the Soviet soldier, partisan and worker fought and labored FOR HIS CLASS INTEREST, FOR SOCIALISM

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AND HE KNEW IT. The Germans fought for the interest of Krupp and even the most nationalistic Nazi deep down must have suspected this. Were the millions of Soviet partisans fighting for nationalism against the invader merely because he was a foreigner or were they fighting for socialism? If you say nationalism, then please explain why no German Nazi partisan units were formed when the USSR and the US invaded Germany in 1945. Guerrilla War on the scale that existed in the Soviet Union, Albania, China, Yugoslavia, Greece, Poland, Philippines, France and Italy requires more than nationalism for success. Even if nationalist forms were overemphasized in some cases (Yugoslavia and Italy), the overwhelming majority of the cadre and the rank and file saw themselves fighting for socialism, for their class interests. That is why only communists had the ability to organize serious anti-fascist guerrilla struggle during World War II. That is why in every nation the guerrilla bands that fought the Nazis on a purely nationalist anti-German basis could not last and at best degenerated into brigands. This occurred with the Chetniks in Yugoslavia, the Home Army in Poland, with the nationalist guerrillas in Greece, Italy, and elsewhere.

During World War II the Soviet leadership called for "the defense of the fatherland." Here the Trotskyites rush in thinking they have found some big nationalist deviation of Stalin's. But Lenin had, long ago, explained the class content of the terms:

"We are and have been defencists since October 25, 1917, we champion the defence of the fatherland ever since that day. That is because we have shown by deeds that we have broken away from imperialism. We have denounced and published the filthy, bloodstained treaties of the imperialist plotters. We have overthrown our own bourgeoisie. We have given freedom to the peoples we formerly oppressed. We have given land to the people and introduced workers' control. We are in favour of defending the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic."103

The diplomatic deals that the Soviet state entered into with various imperialist powers were in the main necessary. A serious study of the objective conditions of the time would prove that the non-Aggression Pact with Germany of 1939 was essential to the survival of the workers' state. A similar study would show that most of the agreements with the Anglo-U.S. leaders were likewise essential. If communists think that in some particular agreement (Yalta is a possibility) the USSR gave away too much or that they were unnecessarily polite to the imperialists this conclusion has to be based on a study of the objective conditions.

But the Trotskyites and anarchists are opposed to agreements of any kind with the imperialists and their type of thinking would have doomed the Soviet Union from the start. It is obligatory for communists to take every advantage of inter-imperialist contradictions, not to advance the interests of one or the other imperialist groups but to advance the interests of world revolution. This was clear aim of Soviet World War II strategy as the results show. The results of Soviet strategy during World War II (and their diplomacy was a crucial element in that strategy) were:

- (1) The crushing defeat of world fascism, that, had it triumphed, would have destroyed the labor movement and put working conditions back to the era of feudalism.
- (2) Preparing the objective conditions for the socialist Revolution in China, Albania, Korea, Vietnam and Czechoslovokia.
- (3) A huge growth in numbers (tripling or quadrupling pre-war strength) of the International Communist Movement around the world.
- (4) Marxism-Leninism became the most popular world-wide mode of thought. U.N. surveys in the post-war period showed books by Marx and Lenin outselling the Bible.

There were unquestionably serious weaknesses as well as strengths in the post-war Communist Movement. But Soviet World War II strategy had contributed more strengths than weaknesses. The policy of diplomatic compromises that Stalin entered into was proven correct.

Point Five: Coming from PLP the charge that Stalin reduced democratic centralism to arbitrary centralism is absolutely hypocritical.\* In fact it is clearly contrary to the expressed feelings of Milt Rosen, who stated on a number of occasions that one of Stalin's errors was that "he should have killed more." 104 Rosen dedicated his 1975 San Francisco speech to Stalin "because he killed more of them than anyone else." 105† Point Five was opportunistically thrown in RTR III to satisfy the more consistent Trotskyites in the PL leadership in 1971.

The truth is that there were errors made in the USSR that it tended to replace democratic centralism with arbitrary centralism, although never anywhere near to the extent that this occurred in PLP. These errors occurred from 1935-1945. The objective con-

<sup>\*</sup>See in the next chapter how PLP reduced democratic centralism to arbitrary centralism.

<sup>†</sup>If that is the best thing to be said about Stalin then the fundamentally anti-Stalin outlook of Rosen comes through in this hypocritical dedication.

ditions of the time, i.e.: the Trotskyite campaign of assassination of top Soviet cadre\* followed by the life and death struggle with the Nazi military machine† made these errors of the Stalin leadership understandable, but not excuseable. One of the lessons communist leaders have to learn from the Soviet experience is that the broadest possible proletarian democracy is fundamental to the preservation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. And preservation of democracy is most valuable when it is objectively most difficult, in particular in wartime. Of course the RTR III authors had no intentions of drawing such lessons as we shall see.

Point Six: This is another anti-Stalin lie. Millions of workers and peasants were deeply involved in the leadership of sharp political struggles against the kulaks during the collectivization, against the capitalist-minded factory managers during the Stakhanovism campaign, against fascism during the whole period 1933-1935. Moreover, there was very widespread Marxist education and study. At the factory level there was intensive aetheist agitation, detailed discussion of the Five-Year Plans, full discussion of the 1936 Constitution and sharp debate with Trotskyism.

That the Soviets could have done more and done it better is indisputable. The Chinese Cultural Revolution opened up new vistas in making Marxism-Leninism the property of the broad masses. But RTR III is completely off base with its elitism charge. Even veteran anti-communist professors would not repeat such utter nonsense. The RTR III analysis of the Bolshevik strategy and tactics and of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR was not new but a rehash of old anti-Stalin or anti-Lenin slanders. The RTR III "new" analysis was familiar Utopian Socialism, Anarchism and Trotskyism. The view of RTR III is totally false and served only to justify PLP's isolation and retreat from the U.S. mass movement.

Next RTR III trained its anti-Marxist guns on China. PLP took advantage of the development of an opportunist foreign policy in China that was becoming increasingly obvious in 1970-1971 and made some novel developments in anarchist "theory," if it can be called such.

Their first "discovery" was the on-again, off-again dictatorship of the proletariat in China. They claimed the dictatorship of the proletariat ended in 1960 then was restored during the Cultural

Revolution and then lost again. The first difficulty with this rather unique view was that the only major change in China's leadership in the 1959-1960 period was the purge of the notoriously pro-Khrushchev Defense Minister, Peng-Teh-Huai. The ending of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR in 1953-1956 was accompanied by the death of Stalin, the murder of Beria and others and a military coup, led by Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Marshall Zhukov, which forced the purge of 2/3 of the Soviet Central Committee, including all of Stalin's closest associates.

The second difficulty with the RTR III view of capitalism restored to China in 1960 was the great anti-Revisionist polemics of 1963-1965. As we noted above this great ideological struggle caused a tremendous forward thrust for the world revolutionary movement, including the founding of PL itself. This great modern contribution to Marxism-Leninism could only have been the product of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The RTR III wiseacres, however, have an answer for this:

"At no time did the CCP question any of the tenets of Marxism-Leninism as it had always interpreted it, especially its compromises with nationalism and united-fronts alliances with secondary imperialists against "the main enemy."

"Moreover, throughout the period of bitter back and forth polemics, the Chinese continued to maintain effective unity of action with the Soviet Union in delivering arms to Vietnam over the Chinese railroads. At no time did the Chinese engage in public polemics against Soviet aid. . . .

"The anti-Soviet polemics were necessary in order to defend that body of ideas which corresponded to the class interests of the bourgeois class. Had the Chinese leaders gone along with the Khrushchevite ideology they would have been exposed before the masses and would have lost the "Left" cover under which capitalist counter-revolution is most likely to succeed."106

So the RTR III detectives, who in another context rail mightily against the conspiratorial view of history, have sniffed out a very clever Chinese plot. The anti-revisionist polemics (the polemics were never "anti-Soviet") you see, were only a smokescreen to hide the counter-revolutionary restoration of capitalism. The PL leadership could have carried this reasoning worthy of Perry Mason, one step further and "discovered" that Lenin wrote State and Revolution and the Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky as a " 'Left' cover" to hide his "counter-revolutionary" intentions of introducing NEP.

"At no time did the CCP question any of the tenets of Marxism-

<sup>\*</sup>Among the large number of cadres murdered by the Trotsky-directed terrorists were Kirov, Mezheninsky, and Maxim Gorky, the world-famous writer.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>†</sup>As Franco pointed out the fascists were always preceded by a Fifth Column in this period.

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Leninism, as it had always interpreted them. . ." This is a strange formulation. At best it is proof that PLP and the CCP interpreted Marxism differently, not that China is capitalist. But the more likely meaning is the oft-repeated PL nonsense that revisionism means not going along with PLP's notions on how to revise the fundamental tenets of Marxism-Leninism.

The CCP allowed Soviet arms to go to Vietnam over Chinese railways. Here is the crux of the question, as far as PL is concerned. The CCP was revisionist because they aided Vietnam against U.S. imperialism; China was capitalist because they allowed arms to pass through Chinese railroads to the frontline liberation fighters. The test for a revolutionary in the eyes of the anarchists was to what lengths a Party would go in order to sabotage the Vietnamese struggle against U.S. imperialism. No wonder, PLP saw itself as the only revolutionary Party in the world. This concept of an on-again, offagain dictatorship is, of course, nonsense and reflects PL's anarchist view of the state. The working class held power in China in the whole period in question. During that time China was the main support of working class revolutionary movements and national liberation movements around the world. China after 1953 was the number one enemy of U.S. imperialism and in the CCP were found many of the chief defenders and developers of Marxist-Leninist theory.

For PL to concede socialism ever existed in China at all was difficult and clearly some passages in RTR III throw doubt in this direction:

"Throughout the period of revolutionary struggle in the countryside, (1927-1949) the line of the CCP contained two contradictory aspects: on the one hand there was a "poor-peasant" class struggle line directed against both the landlords and the capitalist rich-peasants and calling for collective forms of landholding; on the other hand, there was a 'rich-peasant' new-democratic class collaborationist line directed solely against the most important landlords and the Japanese imperialists and advocating partial reliance on local capitalists."107

There were not two contradictory lines; there was the mass line and the Party's line. The inability of the anarchists to even comprehend the most elementary concept of a mass line is clear in this passage. The mass line changes, depending on objective conditions, and this leads to a relatively broad or relatively narrow united front. But the Party retained the goal of workers' power. In fact the broader the united front the better chances for propagandizing com-

munism on a broad level. During the United Front Period with Chiang-Kai-Shek millions of Chinese workers and peasants were trained by the CCP in Marxism-Leninism.

But this contradiction, mass line and vanguard line existing and developing together, which millions of CCP cadre easily understood passes by PLP altogether. RTR III jumps to the conclusion that a united front policy necessarily means cadre not trained in socialism:

"The ideological committment of the bulk of cadres was thus not to socialism, as a system of social relations among men, but to national economic development, which they would tend, as a result of class background and education, to conceive in capitalist terms."

"It was, in fact, the bourgeois road that prevailed. Rather than winning the bourgeois intellectuals to communism, the Party was won over, to material incentive. This was a consequence of the new-democratic line. Having taken power without a mass force of workers and peasants won ideologically to communism and having committed itself to satisfying the immediate material aspirations of the masses, the party had to rely on bourgeois technicians to manage affairs of state and economy."105

The majority of the CCP cadre were committed to socialism, but the anarchists object to their also being committed to improving the material conditions of the masses. Once again the anarchists see the struggles for reforms as precluding the struggle for socialism. But the opposite is true. Without being immersed in the struggle for reforms, without leading the struggle to improve the material conditions of the masses, socialism is just empty talk, a dream without living content. If socialism doesn't mean being committed "to satisfying the immediate material aspirations of the masses" then what use is such socialism to the masses. The workers, and rightly so, expect socialism to produce a qualitative improvement in their lives; they have no use for anarchist dreams. In fact whenever the anarchists have achieved temporary hegemony in a revolutionary situation, the material conditions of the masses took a disastrous turn and the masses were disgusted enough with such fake socialism to allow the conservatives to return. Engels wrote about such a case in his classic study of Spanish anarchism in 1873: "The Bakuninists at Work."

Scientific socialists are leaders of the reform struggles as well as the revolutionary struggles. It is this dual committment, or rather the understanding of the dialectical connection between the two, that separates Marxism from anarchism Utopian socialism. As a corallary Marxism describes two stages of socialism: in the first stage, distribution of goods and services is according to work; in

the second stage, communism, distribution is according to need. Marxism holds that the second stage can be reached only after the productive capacity is built up to greatly surpass needs, after the last outposts of capitalism around the world have fallen, all forms of bourgeois ideology have been finally defeated, and the differences between town and country, manual and mental labor, and between nations have disappeared. Only at this point, obviously a number of generations after the revolution, can distribution be according to need. If distribution according to need is prematurely undertaken production will fall below consumption, and a political-economic crisis will arise that will weaken the dictatorship of the proletariat and delay or even endanger altogether the advance to communism.

The utopian socialists and anarchists believe they can jump this first stage of socialism. And it was in defeating these idealist trends that Marx and Engels developed scientific socialism. In criticizing the CCP policies of distribution according to work RTR III advertises itself as a throwback to pre-Marxian utopian socialism. RTR III attacks the CCP for not maintaining the more egalitarian "supply system" that marked guerilla struggle. But this argument is absurd. The supply system of guerrilla bands cannot be transposed upon a modern nation, especially one that has to vastly increase its productive forces. In the necessary struggle to increase the productive forces of a socialist country in the first stage some of the easy egalitarianism of the revolutionary days is inevitably lost. But by building up the productive forces the material basis for a permanently egalitarian society, communism, is eventually laid. The new equality of communism won't rest on the temporary conditions of a revolutionary army sharing scarcity, but a whole society permanently sharing plenty. Thus the egalitarianism of the revolutionary days returns but this time to stay. This process is called the negation of the negation. The PL anarchists only saw the first negation and in deep despair they lost heart and concluded China must have been capitalist since 1960. From this experience they eventually went on to declare that Marx was wrong about socialism:

"On the question of Marx's famous slogan, 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his work.' Historical experience has shown that this is not an adequate guide to govern the development of productive forces and social relations under socialism." 109

And PLP goes on to declare that whoever does not agree with this major revision of Marxism is. . . "a revisionist."

RTR III begins its analysis of Chinese foreign policy with the

Bandung Conference of 1955. This conference was significant in two says: (1) It was the diplomatic debut of China after being isolated by the U.S. imperialists during the Korean War. (2) It was the first Afro-Asian governmental conference that mainly concentrated its fire on U.S. imperialism. The U.S. imperialists were very upset at the time; it was the first sign that the U.S. State Department policy of "containment of communism" was coming unravelled. RTR III is also upset; the anarchists, like the U.S. imperialists, although from a different perspective, felt China's diplomatic isolation was "not a bad thing."

Thus in the view of the anarchists Chinese International policy was always rotten. In this they ignore China's aid to Korea during the Korean War, their internationalist help to national liberation movements from Zanzibar to Burma to the Philippines, not to speak of their tremendous help to Vietnam, the exposure of the reactionary essence of the Indian ruling class, and their policy of helping the growth of new communist parties all over the world, including PLP. The essence of China's diplomatic policy until 1969 was (1) proletarian internationalism and (2) within that context to take advantage of contradictions among the imperialist powers, and contradictions between imperialism and the national bourgeosie.

There were, to be sure all along, some serious weakness in Chinese foreign relations. The uncritical love-feast that the CCP engaged in with Sukarno, at the same time the Indonesian military was preparing its fascist coup helped to cause the catastrophic losses that a great people suffered. After 1969 proletarian internationalism no longer played a serious part in Chinese foreign policy. Any force, including U.S. imperialism, with which the CCP could unite against Soviet social-imperialism, was opportunistically favored, even if this meant in some cases stabbing in the back proletarian revolutionaries (Ceylon, Bangladesh, or Burma) or national liberation movements (Angola or Zaire). Nevertheless RTR III contains no serious critique of Chinese foreign policy. Such a critique\* would necessarily involve a careful materialist analysis of the strengths and weaknesses during the whole period. The anarchists merely use the obvious weaknesses to attack the whole idea of the Leninist policy of taking advantage of contradictions among the imperialists in order to advance socialism. The anarchists instead propose a policy of absolute diplomatic isolation. As Lenin said, such a policy would mean the socialist state "could not exist at all without flying to the moon."110

There were definitely very serious weaknesses in the dictatorship

<sup>\*</sup>This paper is not the place for such a critique, but one needs to be written.

of the proletariat in China. These gave rise to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, which broke out in 1966. It was a massive revolutionary effort to strengthen and develop the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the revolutionary upsurge that lasted until 1969 definite political groupings emerged, which ranged from an extreme right represented by forces who wanted to return Peng-Teh-Huai to power to ultra-left anarchists. In between were factions headed by Liu-Shao-Chi, Chou-En-Lai, the so-called "Gang of Four," more consistent left-wingers within the Cultural Revolution Group 7 as well as local groups of various hues and groups within the military. Mao-Tse-Tung, himself, worked with different of these groupings at different times. This is not the place for a detailed history of the Cultural Revolution. We will limit our discussion to PL's analysis and how their analysis fit in with the anarchist essence of RTR III. But we should note that by early 1977 it was clear that Chou-En-Lai's moderate Right faction had won out. Hua-Kuo-Feng, and Teng-Hsaio-Ping were allies of Chou's during the Cultural Revolution. And since the foreign policies of China changed not a whit, and the domestic policies did not change qualitatively, with the expulsion of the "Gang of Four" it is clear that this Moderate-Right Group had already achieved hegemony by 1971, when RTR III was written. Thus somewhere in the period 1968-1970 the genuine Left had lost its hold on state power in China. Whether this genuine Left meant the "Gang of Four," the other more consistently leftist members of the Cultural Revolution Group, the group around Mao's "close-comrade-in-arms" Lin Piao, some combination of local Red Guard organizations, †† or some combination of the above can't be said without a deeper study and analysis.

The PL leadership, however, was not at all cautious about making its own analysis despite the scant amount of information available in 1970. This is because they relied not on material facts, but on idealism. The PL anarchists, of course, identified as the genuine Left in China, the ultra-left anarchists.

Since the authors of RTR III knew no more about these forces other than what they had read in the press or in the various CIA-funded translation services, available in U.S. libraries, they identified the "genuine Left" in China by its policies. In particular PLP identified three policies as representative of the "genuine Left:"

(1) the policy of preventing Soviet arms from reaching Vietnam by derailing the munitions trains and seizing the weapons.

(2) Refusal to go along with Mao's idea of carrying on produc-

tion at the same time as making the revolution.

(3) The belief that 90% of the CCP cadre were rotten and must stand aside.

Although these ideas were undoubtedly held in whole or in part by millions of activists at one point or another during the Cultural Revolution they are basically "Left in form, Right in essence." It is not difficult to see why PLP hailed the policy of halting Soviet arms shipments to Vietnam. But is impossible to imagine a genuine — Left group choosing this means of arms procurement. At this very same time the Vietnamese were fighting the big battles that culminated in the Tet Offensive. Even Soviet weapons could kill U.S. troops, and for someone to unilaterly decide that the Vietnamese front-line fighters shouldn't use these weapons aided only the U.S. imperialists and did absolutely nothing to fight revisionism in China, Vietnam or in the USSR.

To stop all production in a *socialist state* for any length of time in order to carry on a revolution can only hurt the workers and peasants. It can do the bourgeoisie or capitalist roaders no harm whatsoever. In the specific material conditions of China in 1967 a prolonged industrial shutdown could have caused a disastrous decline in food production. But PLP had already argued better to let the masses starve if the distribution system is not egalitarian. In this way the anarchists display their love for the people.

PLP's enthusiasm for the policy of forcing 90% of the cadre to step down is at first glance not so easy to understand. PLP's leading cadre have lifetime sinecures if they toe the line and obey Milt Rosen's orders. But PLP had no intention of applying the lessons of the Cultural Revolution to itself, only to others. The anarchists are opposed to the dictatorship of the proletariat. They do not believe in any state, even a workers' state. The demand for 90% of the cadre to step down (In China this meant at least 10,000,000 people.) was a demand to dismantle the state apparatus altogether. The dictatorship of the proletariat would have gone under and since the anarchists had nothing to replace it except some purely local or regional committees the bourgeoisie and imperialists would have rushed into the vacuum. Mao's dictum that 95% of the cadre are good and should be struggled with in a comradely way, and that only 5% of the cadre, for the most part senior capitalist roaders, should step aside was the only serious cadre policy consistent with maintaining the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In sum RTR III fared no better analyzing the experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat in China than in analyzing their Bolshevik experience. The document took advantage of the obvious Rightward drift in CCP policies after 1970 in order to promote its

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>†</sup>For example, Chen-Po-ta and Kang, Sheng or possibly Wang Li or Yao Teng-Shan.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>††</sup>For example, "Sheng-Wu-lien" in Hunan, "May 16" corps in Peking, "Red Flag" in Kwangtung.

anarchist view of the state.

PLP never inculcated serious study of M-L among the membership; therefore PL members and base were for the most part totally unequipped theoretically to recognize RTR III's anarchist, utopian socialist and Trotskyite essence. Instead what was obvious was that Kissinger and Nixon were meeting with Mao. Therefore RTR III was PL's answer to Mao's Red Book and from then on members who asked for study of Marxism were told: "It's all in RTR III." There were some PL members who were able to see that RTR III was a serious deviation from Marxism-Leninism. Bill Epton was the most important; he quit PL before the RTR III draft was written but wrote a very good critique of the RTR III's line.\* At approximately the same time as the Epton split, but independently of him a small Party group at Davis, California also wrote a critique of the developing RTR III line. In a series of articles written in late 1970 and early 1971 the California Marxist-Leninists refuted the RTR III position on the land question, the "anarchist campaign against the dictatorship of the proletariat," and the RTR III line against socialist diplomacy. They in addition pointed out the idealist essence of the RTR III line and showed how the psychological-individualist method of work of PLP evolved from their anarchist politics.<sup>†</sup> They were forced out of the Party. Finally after the draft of RTR III was issued in early in 1971 a number of PL cadre resigned over the anti-Marxist deviations of PLP. Dave Davis, a PL leader in New York, wrote a long and stinging rebutal to the idealist essence of PL's new line. RTR III begins by saying that "A scientific evaluation of history must have as its core the study of revolutionary movements." Davis drew the distinction between this idealist statement and historical materialism: "A scientific evaluation of history must have as its core a study of society, and its contradictions, and on this basis, a study of the revolutionary movements to resolve them."111 There were a number of other forces in and around PLP, including former leaders who saw the RTR III line as Trotskyist and counterrevolutionary.

A significant number of other Marxist-Leninist forces in PLP also had serious reservations about RTR III but were so disoriented by what was going on in China that they went along with the anarchism and Trotskyism in RTR III since at least PLP wasn't meeting with Kissinger. From the nadir of isolationism, sectarianism, anarchism,

utopian socialism and Trotskyism that PLP reached with the publication of RTR III in July, 1971 different small groups of Marxists within the Party waged a long, difficult, hardly ever conscious and ultimately futile struggle over the next six years to return PLP to the Marxist-Leninist path. Why this was doomed to fail has to do with the entrenchment of the leadership.

<sup>\*</sup>See below, Chapter 10

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>†</sup>The articles were collected in a booklet, "The Anti-Marxist-Leninist Line of Progressive Labor" by John Ericson and Charles Loren.

### **CHAPTER 7**

### THE ENTRENCHED LEADERSHIP

A question remaining is how the NSC was able to lead four big retreats from the mass revolutionary movement of the sixties and then justify this isolation and withdrawal by issuing an anarchist document like RTR III. Why weren't the members who opposed at least some of these moves, able to make a dent in the anarchist drift of the Party? There is no one answer but several factors in various portions played their role: (1) the growing gap in theoretical training between leaders and members (2) the effect of PLP-CCP-fraternal relations (3) the specific characteristics of the leadership clique and its peculiar methods of inner-Party struggle (4) advancing totalitarianism within the Party, i.e.: the conversion of democratic-centralism into arbitrary centralism. We will examine these points in turn.

When the PLM was founded in 1963 only the older former CP cadre (full-timers and intellectuals) had had any Marxist-Leninist theoretical training. Since almost all these forces except Rosen and Mort Scheer had guit by 1966, during the period 1965-1966 these last two stood head and shoulders above the rest of the membership in terms of theoretical training and experience in the communist movement. Scheer was personally very loyal to Milt Rosen, which left Rosen virtually unopposed theoretically. It would have been very difficult for the new young activists then entering the Party to challenge Rosen on a point of theory any more than a new student can get away with challenging a professor. Those who tried it were dealt with by Rosen in the manner very reminiscent of an arrogant professor putting down a wiseacre student. After the second cadre school in the summer of 1966 there were no more serious attempts to advance the theoretical level of the membership. In 1967 most study groups were encouraged to stop studying Marxism-Leninism. but instead to study "current PL literature" or labor history. (This was not enforced nationally at that time and study of Marxist-Leninism classics continued here and there until 1973.) The theoretical gap widened from 1966-1971. A few of the new activist PL cadre studied Marxism-Leninism on their own and thus some leaders did learn theory. However, most were encouraged to hold theory in contempt; activism was hailed in opposition to "intellectualizing." Those who did attempt to refute the leadership theoretically were

forced to split and this encouraged a further anti-theoretical backlash which made it all the more difficult to encourage the widespread study of Marxism-Leninism, or to cross swords theoretically with Rosen.

The extremely low ideological level in RTR III was both a result and cause of PLP's weakness in theory. The writers of RTR III relied on their readers' having no more than a passing acquaintance with Marxism and no real knowledge of history. Otherwise they could not have so boldly distorted even the most popular of Marx's works, the *Communist Manifesto*, nor could they have so ignored historical reality in their idealist prescriptions to the Bolsheviks and the CCP. After publication of RTR III all Marxist works, even those by Marx and Lenin, were considered "revisionist" if they did not conform to RTR III. So that study of theory in PLP was restricted to RTR III or to a few of Lenin's works that were misinterpreted to be in line with RTR III.

The CCP, ironically, also played an important role in guaranteeing, the Rosen leadership of PL. The forces who had the most ability to challenge Rosen were also the forces who were first attracted to PL because PL was the closest thing to the CCP in the U.S. As long as the CCP gave their stamp of approval to PLP and never openly criticized the PLP leadership, Marxist-Leninist forces within the PLP who looked to the CCP for leadership of the World Communist Movement would be very hesitant to challenge Rosen directly. appeared, at least until 1969, almost equivalent to a challenge to Mao-Tse-Tung. There is no underestimating the tremendous power this gave Rosen. As we now know the CCP did not approve of PL's retreat from the anti-war movement nor probably the BLM. But instead of openly criticizing the Rosen leadership the way Stalin in his day had openly criticized the leadership of the old CPUSA in the twenties, the CCP only raised differences in private with the top PL leadership, and these differences were kept from the membership or only distorted versions of the conversations were put out by the NSC.112 Thus hardly anyone in PL knew these differences existed until late 1969 and the CCP lost a tremendous opportunity to encourage the Marxist-Leninist forces within PLP, if indeed they had had that desire.

As the split with CCP and PLP arose, Marxist-Leninist forces within the PL were disoriented. Under the searing criticism of China, conducted by the NSC during 1970, apparent Rightist mistakes of the CCP were being highlighted to all in PLP, but the most blind Maoists. All the international defeats from Ghana to Indonesia were blamed on the CCP line. This was very disorienting to Marxists who

had learned so much from the CCP polemics. It was on a smaller scale comparable to the confusion that reigned in the International Communist Movement after Khrushchev's anti-Stalin speech in 1956. Within this confusion the NSC came up with a strong and self-confident line and most Marxist-Leninist forces in PLP, who were relatively new to Marxist-Leninist theory in the first place, generally buried their trepidations about RTR III and rallied behind the Party which now seemingly was the only true revolutionary force around, or so it said. Neither the CCP nor the various U.S. Maoist groups made the slightest attempt to reach Marxist-Leninist forces within PLP. So as verbal confrontation with the Maoists turned in late 1971 into sectarian fist-fights the tendency of those forces, who had had criticisms of RTR III and of the four retreats, was to fight to unite the Party around the NSC and forget or put aside the differences around RTR III. Finally there seemed in mid-1971 some hope that the anarchist and sectarian errors of PLP could be corrected. (See below for explanation.) Given the confusion of the time it was not so easy to reject out of hand PLP's claim to be the new center of revolutionary thought, at least given the level of Marxist-Leninist training that even the best forces in PLP had.

If Rosen and his clique were incapable of leading the mass movement they were capable of dominating PLP. Rosen learned how to totally dominate small meetings by his personality so that all speakers address their remarks to him, always giving the impression of having something utterly profound to say. He had a biting wit and is the past master of the sarcastic put-down; in meetings he always flatters one member while putting down the other. Rosen's talents for dominating small meetings combined with theoretical greeness of the Marxist-Leninist forces in PLP prevented serious challenge to so right-wing an essence of the four retreats and the anarchist analysis of RTR III.

Around Rosen there grew in the late sixties a clique of admirers, who at least for a while, were absolutely loyal to Rosen. These came to identify the Party with Rosen, Marxism-Leninism with Rosen's thinking and generally brought all problems in the Party's work to Rosen directly and privately, avoiding any collective discussion. This way if Rosen thought them in the wrong they would not be put down publically. These forces by 1970 included Mort Scheer, Walter Linder, Fred Jerome (San Francisco Party chief), Bob Leonhardt and a few other New York leaders. It is not incidental that this clique was 100% made up of middle-class whitemale New Yorkers.

Since Rosen in a showdown with any opposition could count

on the absolute personal loyalty of this group,\* which was a majority of the NC in 1970, any Marxist-Leninist opposition was automatically doomed before it started. This fact of life, which was well known in the leadership, naturally inhibited Marxist-Leninist forces from challenging Rosen. Instead Marxist-Leninist forces either split from PLP, or tried to influence policy by influencing Rosen privately as a counselor.

This clique of eight to ten admirers was the source of the Rosen cult. In the areas they led, these leaders quoted extensively from Rosen. The cult reinforced not only Rosen's leadership position, but also in the local areas gave each of Rosen's chosen representatives a portion of the former's authority. A corrupting mechanism between leaders and members slowly developed, and the leadership was increasingly seen as a transmission belt from Rosen to the members. Becoming a leader of PLP meant among other things being "won" to that view of leadership.

The club leaders were appointed by the area leader and the area leader was appointed by Rosen. With appointments handled this way, and elections non-existent, not only the NC but also the area committees and the clubs had no collective life. The leaders' job was to fight for Rosen's line in the area or in the club. "The primary act of leadership is not one of skill, but of fighting for and carrying out the Party line.", Internal Bulletin, April 5, 1977 (his emphasis). In other words neither organizational nor political competence, never mind ties with the mass movement is required, but only loyalty to the Party line. There was a historical development toward this view of leadership. As late as 1968 in his "Build a Base" speech Rosen had laid emphasis on the opposite aspect, competence and ties to the mass movement, but the development of the four retreats and the line of RTR III put one increasing premium on loyalty and there was a decreasing utility in competence, while lingering ties to the mass movement among some Party leaders was suspicious if anything. So by 1971 the primary aspect of the contradiction was reversed and loyalty was the primary responsibility of leadership although this was not stated by Rosen in so many words until after the 1975 struggle around united front, and not spelled out in print until after the split with the San Francisco Party. (See below.)

The PL leadership basically never relied on its members nor did it listen to them. Increasingly the membership were regarded as sheep to be herded from one campaign or retreat to the other, always

<sup>\*</sup>Although one or two of his clique would disagree with him at a particular meeting their personal affection and loyalty to Rosen was never in question.

with only the most minimal discussion and never with a two-sided debate or self-critical evaluation. As the Party became isolated from the mass movement and forced to rely only on its own forces the members came to be regarded as so much cannon fodder to be used as the leadership saw fit in this or that anarchistic action. Thus the leadership became entrenched because it lost touch with the people even the rank and file Party members, not to speak of the millions in the shops and the schools.

In early 1966 Fred Jerome wrote a piece for PL magazine entitled "Criticism and Self-Criticism" which typified the PLP approach as to inner-Party struggle. The article was heavily based on Liu-Shao-Chi's writings which emphasized personal self-cultivation as a communist. Like Liu, Jerome proposed what amounted to a psychological struggle for all the weaknesses in members. Rosen and Jerome were both amateur psychologists and generally had a psychological explanation for every real or supposed weakness in a member. Political opposition was seldom dealt with on its merits but was assumed instead to be the manifestation of alleged psychological problems that the opponent had, which were always diagnosed with great enthusiasm and in great detail by the leadership. "You're tired." "You're afraid." "You don't want to win." were the epithets used when a member raised differences, political or tactical. Jerome in his tenure as West Coast Party leader from 1968-1972 took his more consistent Freudianism to its logical conclusion and grossly interfered in a number of marriages of PL members in an effort to correct their "weaknesses" or failing this to break-up the marriage. Rosen did less of this. He instead was master of the sly behind-theback joke or police-agent innuendo. Israel in Boston used both the Rosen and Jerome methods and some high-powered browbeating of his own invention, 113

However it varied the PL method of inner-Party struggle was usually at least two-thirds psychological. This inhibited the political development of the members. Political questions were reduced to "fear" or "guts;" members were not trained to deal politically with the class struggle within the Party or struggle over Marxist-Leninist theory. Even forces within the leadership who tried to avoid this psychological clap-trap were often victims of it themselves when they disagreed and often picked up some of the rotten methods of Jerome, Rosen and Israel. The psychological browbeating reached an intense pitch during the Challenge Summer in order to force the troops out to the plant gates with the Challenges. To the extent this method of inner-Party struggle held sway it was virtually impossible to launch a political challenge to the leadership. And, coincidentally or not, Freudian psychoanalysis was rampant within PLP during the year RTR III was being prepared and circulated.

Servility in the members was built up by playing on middle-class ex-students' "guilt" feelings. The leadership made them feel ashamed of their "fear" if they hesitated before a particular anarchist action. Their class backgrounds were the reasons for both lack of success in particular campaigns and the continuing desire of many rank-andfilers to form united fronts with "revisionists, nationalists, or other petty-bourgeois forces." This constant harping on the "weak" members was designed to lead to guilt feelings and thus to servility and to obedience to the "tough, working class" leadership. Rosen never tired of telling younger members "heroic" stories of his brief experience as a shop steward in Buffalo, always clearly implying that younger PLP members had not yet approached his industrial accomplishments.\* The members were "weak," so direction of the Party had to be entrusted to the "proven" few, which mainly meant Rosen.

Rosen tried to justify this petty-bourgeois theory of leadership by falsely invoking Stalin as an example. Besides the gross immodesty involved, Rosen was guilty of a 100% distortion of history. Stalin's method of leadership was exactly the opposite. Stalin always emphasized that he was merely "one of the pupils of the advanced railroad workers of the Tiflis Railway workshops."114 He dealt with his opponents politically in the first place, organizationally if necessary, but never psychologically. Proletarian revolutionaries, like Stalin, never resort to talk about "fear" or "guts" but appeal to the political intelligence of workers and communists.

Additionally it was next to impossible for all but the very top leaders (usually only Rosen and Linder) to have any hard information about the state of the Party or what the other leaders were thinking. Hardly anyone but Rosen and Linder had more than a very approximate notion about things like the numbers of papers sold, numbers of members, growth of the Party if any, the actual outcome of a mass or inner-Party struggle. Rosen never gave out honest membership figures even to NC members; the Challenge sales figures were notorious exagerations. Challenge articles were never taken seriously as a source of information. At the NC meetings the area reports were often exagerated either to build up or put down an area leader. depending on the way the wind was blowing at that particular

<sup>\*</sup>He actually said this is his "self-critical" report to open the 1968 pre-Convention discussion.

meeting. Occasionally an internal bulletin article gave the true picture of an area or club, but by and large no-one in the leadership except Rosen and Linder had any serious information about what was going on in other areas. This system of deception and exageration naturally worked against challenges to Rosen's leadership. The NSC put out the information that would make it look good and any opponent look bad. On that score no one was in a position to challenge the NSC.

The basis of the Rosen clique's method of inner-Party struggle is idealism. They set up a "plan" based on subjective wishes and then try to whip up pure enthusiasm in the members to carry it out:

"In addition we're trying to be much sharper in inner-party struggle. Concretely this means a drive to make every member accountable for 75 sales [of CHALLENGE] per issue. . "115

Thus inner-Party struggle was never seen politically as a struggle against certain well-defined political positions, but as mainly pep talks to inject enthusiasm into the membership to carry out the "game plan." They liked to quote Vince Lombardi, the football coach, who was a master at this type of thing. The other side of the coin was that when opposition developed the opponents were accused of "developing middle-age flab" 116 and inner-Party struggle was seen as a battle by the leadership to prevent the development of "middle-age flab in the members."

This idealist approach is the opposite of Marx and Lenin's method, which is to investigate material reality and develop a political struggle based on two lines. But the idealism of the entrenched leadership served a purpose, it created an environment where political struggle, and hence opposition to them, could not survive.

Thus the entrenched Rosen clique never had to bear a serious challenge to their leadership. Yet, born of a split in the CP themselves, they fretted about a split in PLP and constantly took precautions to shore up Rosen's position. This meant taking step-by-step organizational measures to restrict democracy in the Party and, to enhance Rosen's authority. Living in constant fear of splits they suffered many:

- the split led by Leibel and a majority of the San Francisco Bay Area membership in January 1964 over the publication of "Road to Revolution."
- the split of 20 to 25 of the New York City leaders in the Spring of 1966 over the dissolution of the May 2nd Movement.
  - · the split led by Lee Coe and Van Lydergraf which involved

all of the Seattle group and most of the San Francisco trade-union section in December, 1966, over the publication of "Road to Revolution II."

- the split led by Una Mulzac, in January 1969, which involved almost all that was left of the Harlem Club, after the defections of 1967.
- the split led by Bill Epton which involved a number of New York Party leaders in late 1970.
- the split led by Jared Israel which involved almost all of the Boston Party in January 1974.
- the split of the Norwich, Ct., Club, one of the few real industrial clubs still left in the party during the summer of 1976.
- the split of 72 California members (50% of the California Party)
  in April, 1977 after the expulsion of Hari Dillon.

And these were only the major splits. Additionally, top NC Party leaders (Jeff Gordon, Philipe DeJesus, Janet Foley, Eddie Lemansky, Bill McAdoo, Ed Clark, Alice Jerome) quit individually, resignations in which each case caused extremely serious problems for PLP. Furthermore the resignation of some of PL's very few genuine mass leaders like Willie DeCluitt (Cleveland auto worker), John Levin, Bridges Randle, John Harris, John Ross (S.F. Community leader), the leader of a Midwest Welfare workers union and others was also a serious source of embarrassment. Finally there were a huge number of resignations and expulsions of local leaders and members. An extremely small number of expulsions were justified, many were totally unjustified, but in either case the people who left PLP were rarely dealt with politically.

A healthy democratic Party could have avoided most of these splits and kept 90% of the splittees active as positive forces. This is so even though the splits were of vastly different character. Some splittees like the Epton split, were of Marxist-Leninists, who were driven out of the Party by an anti-Marxist leadership that feared to do battle with them politically. Others like Leibel, Coe and Lydergraf were rightists, who tended toward the revisionism of the CPUSA but even these, or at least the great majority of their followers, could have been kept in had the NSC been willing to permit full and honest debate, as well as discussion at all levels of their positions. Others like the M2M leaders, McAdoo, Mulzac, the Norwich Ct., Club quit over tactical differences, that reflected deep political differences, but the heavy-handed dictatorial methods of the NSC prevented a debate from even beginning and expelled or forced out these people before they had even time to think out the political implications of their differences. Finally there were cases, Jared Israel being the most prominent, of local Milt Rosen's asserting

their independence from New York. This last type of split is inevitable when a hierarchal method of leadership obtains in a Party.

Through all the splits the Party emerged weaker but more monolithic. Since the splitees were rarely, if ever, dealt with politically but instead were accused of anything from fraud to being police agents, from being "afraid" to not wanting to go to work, the Party united after the split not over a set of political principles but over agreement on what was basically gossip. Thus the Party's stockin-trade came to be this one is a police agent, that one defrauded the Party, this one didn't want to get a job, that one was "tired," etc. The resulting lack of political struggle retarded the members' political development and inhibited them from raising political differences lest they be accused of the darkest crimes.

In sum there developed a growing slavishness in attitude and a growing cult around the "wisdom" of RTR III and its chief interpreter, Milt Rosen. But even this "natural" entrenchment of one man power was not enough. Beginning in 1966, the Rosen clique took specific organizational steps to gather all the power in their hands.

The constitution adopted at the founding Convention, April 1965, emphasized democracy; it reflected the healthy civil libertarian emphasis of the mass movement of the time. The constitution carried detailed guarantees of the democratic rights of the members and mandated open debate and open criticism and self-criticism within the leadership. The spirit during the Convention of 1965 and immediately afterwards was fairly democratic and open, as sort of a backlash to the stuffy dictatorial bureaucracy of the CPUSA. And the open, honest, democratic discussions that were so much a part of SNCC and SDS in that period found an echo in PL. But behind this fascade a new totalitarian bureaucracy was gathering the levers of power in their hands. At the Convention of 1965 Fred Jerome whispered to one participant: "We could have railroaded that resolution through but we wanted to be democratic."117 Naturally with that attitude in the leadership it was only a matter of time, and not too much time at that, before the constitution and its spirit were violated.

At the Convention, Rosen proposed a slate of 19 NC members who were duly elected. A twentieth NC member, Eric Johnson, was elected from the floor. The Constitution was reprinted in *PL magazine*, but when that issue ran out the Constitution was never reprinted. As early as 1967 most new members never saw the democratic constitution of the Party which they were joining. By 1971 most members were not even aware a constitution existed.

It was to the advantage of the entrenched leadership to keep the constitution secret from the members.

In late 1966 the NC adopted the rule that democratic-centralism must exist within the NC. This meant that all NC members were to defend NC decisions to the membership, could not mention what. if any, debates went on within the NC, could not criticize another NC member outside the NC. This clear-cut violation of the 18month old constitution was never submitted to the membership for approval but was merely announced by the NC along with "Road to Revolution II." This rule was adopted (such a rule never existed in the Bolshevik Party under Lenin) to keep the serious opposition of four NC members to the "Road to Revolution II" program secret from the members. Thus the new program was not the result of honest debate within the Party but at best only of debate within the NC. At this time the new rule worked only imperfectly, Coe and Lydergraf who disagreed, refused to honor it, and so did Eric Johnson who agreed with the position but saw the need for more debate when he returned to San Francisco. But Coe and Lydergraf were expelled, and Johnson was read the riot act, subsequently NC debates became entirely closed. The non-NC members who opposed an NC decision after that had zero chance of effectively making their voices heard. This rule of closed NC debates served greatly to render virtually impossible a cohesive anti-Rosen opposition.

In 1967 two NC members, the voices of conscience, remembering the promises of 1965, made solitary but futile struggles for democracy. In Chicago, Alice Jerome carried forth democratic opposition to the NSC and in San Francisco, Eric Johnson attempted the same. Neither effort got very far, although A. Jerome's lasted until the Convention of 1968. Ironically A. Jerome's son, Fred, was the NSC leader sent to San Francisco with specific instructions to crush any opposition there at the same time Alice was struggling for different ends in Chicago.

Caught up in the spirit of the Cultural Revolution then in full swing in China, a pre-Convention West Coast conference in late 1967 was organized by Eric Johnson with Jerome's blessing. It was to be a "Red Guard Conference" and was organized in such a way that the rank and file would bring forth their criticisms of the leadership. When this actually occurred in front of Milt Rosen, who was attending as the NSC representative, the roof fell in. F. Jerome adroitly switched sides joining with Rosen in a vicious attack on Johnson and on those rank and filers who had expressed criticisms. Various rank and filers were then induced by means of

not so subtle pressure by Jerome and Rosen to recant and/or attack Johnson instead and/or make gratuitous pronouncements in favor of the new leadership.118

At an NC meeting in early 1968 Rosen went over the slate of the new NC to be elected by the forthcoming convention. Johnson and Alice Jerome\* were to be dropped from the NC as punishment for their struggles for democracy in the Party. A few others were dropped for various reasons. The new NC had only eight instead of twenty members and was made up entirely of white male New Yorkers, with Epton the only Black member. This narrow character of the NC was criticized at the Convention but no new nominations were accepted, and all eight were easily elected.119

The Convention itself did not debate the two main issues presented during the pre-Convention discussion: (1) Alice Jerome's proposals for more democracy within the Party or (2) the proposals by the Lny Marcus-Labor Committee Faction. (Two Labor committeeites were elected as delegates; one had his credentials sumarily revoked by the New York City Committee, while the other was expelled by the Convention.) Instead the only debate was over community control and the impending racist teacher walk-out against community control in New York. The high-point of the Convention was Milt Rosen's speech, "Build a Base in the Working Class," which outlined an intelligent and thoroughly correct strategy for base-building united-front work and inner-Party struggle. Later reprinted as a pamphlet, Rosen's "Build a Base" was his most important positive contribution within PL. Long after Rosen himself rejected it, Marxist-Leninist forces within PL were still learning from it. In a nutshell, "Build a Base" called for working with people where they were at. In basebuilding that meant mixing in with one's fellow workers, students or neighbors, learning from the masses as well as teaching them. In united front work it called for choosing to organize around a slogan that was the lowest common denominator, which still attacked the system. And in inner-Party struggle it called for using the same approach to defeat servility in members. The UF slogan for the anti-war movement was "U.S. Get Out Now" but even this might be too narrow at times, Rosen explained, as the Brooklyn College struggle demonstrated. (See above.)

But in reality the Party was already fairly well into its retreat from the anti-war movement and was already considering "U.S. Get Out, Now" as too *broad*, since it didn't attack the Vietnamese for negotiating. And in inner-Party struggle the good advice of "Build

a Base" also became a dead letter. Servility increased and opposition to Rosen was put down increasingly roughly. In mid-1969 Epton was booted off the NC for failing to defend Rosen's retreat from the BLM. Around the same time the student leaders who had led the successful struggle within SDS were removed from key positions of authority. Israel was dropped from NC and ordered to stay out of Boston's student work; Gordon was removed as national student coordinator as was his West Coast counterpart, John Levin. While Levin was replaced by another mass leader from S.F. State, Gordon was replaced by Bob Leonhardt, a graduate student in French who had never been part of the student movement. The old student leaders roundly opposed Leonhardt's appointment, but Rosen insisted on having his own man lead the student work.

Finally, in mid-1971 came the NC directive that henceforth all articles in the PL literature would be unsigned. This was said to be in order to combat a cult of the individual. However, in reality the directive was a very important step in the entrenchment of the leadership. In the first place elections for the national leadership became more meaningless since rank-and-file members could know a leader in another area only by his writings. Secondly and more importantly, by having all articles represent the opinion of the Party as a whole the opportunities for diversity and debate were severely restricted. By contrast all articles in the Bolshevik Press were signed, even if security required psuedonyms, the Party leaders debated one another openly before the masses, and had to take personal responsibility for what they wrote. This method allows the debate to deepen, positions to be historically developed and the membership to identify with various trends and participate in a real way in Party debate. All this was precluded by the PL insistence on anonymity in articles. Eventually even articles for the internal bulletin were largely written anonymously. What written debate existed was carried on anonymously and members had no way of contacting authors except through the censorship of the Party center.

The Convention of 1973 had even less discussion and debate than the two previous ones. In most areas delegates were appointed from above not elected by clubs, and the NC members were previously bound to unanimously follow the Rosen line in all its particulars at the convention. 120 Both these innovations were illegal constitutionally. Rosen's right-hand man at this convention was Jared Israel, he had been restored to the NC in 1971. Israel used his formidable Boston delegation to support all of Rosen's proposals. The Boston Party was then as big as New York's and the Boston delegation acted unanimously to intimidate any opposition to the NSC. The Rosen-

<sup>\*</sup>In mid-1968 she was removed as Chicago Party leader.

Israel leadership saw to it that the proposed workshop on sexism was squelched. Also rank and file proposals on PL relating to cultural work were pidgeonholed in the education workshop, which was entrusted to Leonhardt. This same workshop recommended that further use in the Party of books by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin or Mao be terminated once and for all. The Rosen-Israel leadership passed these resolutions as well as the controversial 30 for 40 teachers' resolution. (See below.) The new NC was presented as a slate to

all. The vote, at any rate, was a proforma voice vote. Israel's new power was recognized in the newly elected NC which continued the old NC, now grown to 13, only adding two of Israel's assistants from Boston.121

Nonetheless, the very first meeting of this new NC broke down in severe acrimony over an obscure issue\* between Israel and his two cohorts, on the one hand, and Rosen and Linder supported by the other ten on the other. The upshot was a split by Israel and the Boston section in January 1974, amounting to at least 25% of the Party 122 No substantial issues were involved; Rosen and Israel were in close political agreement. Apparently Rosen had begun to fear Israel's growing power in the Party, which Israel had flaunted at the Convention six months previous. Israel detected a Rosen move to cut him down to size, so he out-foxed Rosen, gathered his lovalists and secretly planned the split. When Rosen and Linder went to Boston to "struggle" with Israel they were "ambushed" by the unanimously hostile Boston leadership. The highly antagonistic split followed within days. The Israel group (Party for Worker's Power) soon retreated before the racist tide then sweeping Boston and rapidly shrunk to less than one-fourth its former size, soon eschewing even the name communist and any connection whatsoever with Marxism-Leninism. The right-wing essence of Israel's ultra-left posturing was now laid bare. In most of this Israel only anticipated the rest of PLP by a few years. (See below.)

A few new people were added to the NC to make up for the loss of Israel and his group. But in 1975 Rosen made two other moves to consolidate his hold on the NC and to "prevent another Boston." In the same of adding workers to the NC, a sweeper purge of 10 NC members took place during the summer.† All the

new NC members were personally appointed by Rosen, 123 Neither the old NC nor the new NC nor any collective body approved the names of the new NC. It was a body totally beholden to Rosen personally. Finally, six months later the NC was split into two for once was a novel PLP "contribution" to the "development" of M-L, since no other Marxist-Leninist Party in history operated with two central committees.) Since only Rosen, the faithful Linder and one or two other New York Rosen lackeys met with both NC's, Rosen and his two or three hacks became the real NC. The two ostensible NC's, which now met less frequently were in fact only pep rallies called to hear Rosen's line. 124 PLP went full circle from a democratic organization of the whole membership in 1965 to an organization where only the NC had some collectivity to finally a classic one-man autocracy by early 1976.

In closing the book on PL's early period, we should briefly trace PLP's relations with two other mass movements of the sixties, the community-based movements against exorbitant rents and the women's movement. PLP put a great deal of energy into community work in the 1963-1968 period. In the early period some of it was quite good. In San Francisco's large Latin Mission District, the Party organizer, John Ross formed the Mission Tenants' Union (MTU) which became a small thorn in the sides of the City Fathers. The MTU was responsible for numerous small rent strikes, some successful, as well as fightbacks on other community issues, like the need for stop lights and opposing urban redevelopment. The MTU was was responsible for the construction of a new mini-park in the neigh borhood. Ross became a well-known figure in the community and when he ran for supervisor in 1967 as part of an electoral rent-control campaign the city was afraid enough of both to rule him and the referendum off the ballot. In New York City community work in the lower East Side and the Upper West Side also had its moments but in general was not as successful because of both the objectively more difficult problems of working in New York's less cohesive and larger communities and because the New York Party pursued a more sectarian style of work.

At any rate the community work in the lower East Side withered away in 1966 and in 1968-1969 the work likewise died in the West Side and in San Francisco. As the Party in general moved to a more sectarian outlook, the community work, which necessarily depends on a broad united front with all kinds of forces, as well as flexible organizational forms had to go. Ross and the others who had led PL's community work in San Francisco and New York quit PLP in that period. And the PLP community work was over, another retreat

<sup>\*</sup>The issue was that the New York Party had recruited a person who had been expelled by the Boston Party.

<sup>†</sup>Five of the ten were subsequently restored 6 months to a year later. From here on elections were dropped and the NC was a body selected only by Rosen.

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from the mass movement.

There never was a retreat from the women's movement, since PLP gave the movement against sexism a very wide berth. Beginning around 1968 the movement for women's liberation was a mass movement not nearly as powerful in mass action or militancy as the anti-war movement or BLM, but in terms of lasting concrete gains and changes wrought in the thinking of North Americans the women's movement ranks a par with the other two. As the women's movement was gathering strength in 1968 the PLP national leadership was learning to regard the movement with contempt.

By 1968 the last woman national leader in PLP, Alice Jerome, had been purged. Not until late 1971 had another woman, Janet Foley, had placed on national leadership. In the three and a half years that the PLP NC was all male (and only one Black) the mass women's movement was at its period of greatest development. But in the PLP NC the women's movement was not even discussed seriously and if the subject of sexism arose it was treated as a joke.

Rosen on at least one occasion told a stupid anti-woman story to answer a question about sexism. 125

The Convention of 1965 had mandated a woman's commission, but it was never implemented. In the more democratic years of 1965-1966 PLP women had met to discuss their mutual problems. There were meetings of this nature in New York and San Francisco in 1966. But first Rosen in New York in 1966, then Fred Jerome in San Francisco in 1967 put a stop to these meetings. 126 As long as Alice Jerome was on the NC she kept up a struggle to implement the Convention Resolution on a Woman's Commission, but she was blocked at every turn by the NSC. After she was dropped, the leadership, now completely shot through with male chauvanism, blocked every attempt at discussion of sexism, and refused to countenance the Party's entering into the women's movement at any level, not even with the Party's usual sectarian line.

This neolithic mentality continued in the NC unabated\* until 1973. During the pre-convention discussion that year widespread dissatisfaction with the sexist mentality of the NC burst forth. Numerous articles were written by rank and filers demanding that the Party participate in the woman's movement and that there be a discussion of sexism in the Party. A widespread demand for a workshop on sexism at the convention could no longer be withstood. At the NC meeting on the eve of the convention, Israel and Rosen, uncomfortable with the situation, proposed that as a

way out the Education Workshop could have a subsection on "family problems;" all resolutions and discussions on sexism or the woman's movement would be considered as part of "family problems."127 The same ploy was used to pidgeonhole rank and file demands for a discussion on culture. Somehow a very mild resolution on "family problems" which hardly mentioned PL's problems with sexism, weaved its way from the sub-workshop to the Education Workshop to the floor of the Convention where it was passed and promptly forgotten.

Nevertheless the struggle had a small effect in that the NSC after 1973 gave lip service to fighting sexism (although never in a mass way) and began promoting women to leadership in the Party. (But by 1973 even General Motors was putting women in leadership positions.) As for the mass movement PLP ignored International Women's Day, refused to attend any of the myriad women's conferences or participate in anti-sexist action on any level whatsoever.

The story should end here; PLP was politically dead after 1971. But a serious struggle to reverse the sectarianism and return the Party to Marxism-Leninism was launched in 1971. PLP never returned to its former influence or anything near it, but here and there PL did become a fleeting force in the mass movement, and the Party remained alive and even grew for a time. We will briefly examine the attempt to revive PL (1971-1976) and its ultimate end.

<sup>\*</sup>Out of politeness to Janet Foley, sexist stories ceased in the NC after 1971.

# THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SECTARIANISM 1971-1973

The NSC in mid-1971 attempted to address itself to a problem that could no longer be ignored, the total isolation of PLP. Only a short time before PLP had been at the center of the mass movement; by June 1971, the Party was so totally isolated its jobs demonstrations pulled out only 500. The contrast between the two periods was fresh, and the Party leadership became frightened of its new isolation and began to grope for answers.

Rosen wrote a fairly insightful critique of PL's isolation. This did not deal at all with PL's historical sectarian errors and even praised the 1969-1971 period as one in which PL had "done a fantastic job in re-establishing a communist presence in our country." (Rosen was referring above all to the disastrous "Challenge Summer" scheme.) Nonetheless his article attempted to deal seriously with the question of the mass movement and the Party's relation to it. Commenting on the fact that Party members had worked hard and yet had made no serious progress, Rosen wrote: "Well, if we are doing all this, and we do it bigger and better what is wrong? There is still something wrong. What is wrong is that we are still isolated from the mass movement. What is worse, we often do not see the mass movement, and if we do, we think it is rotten." Rosen then linked this judgement to PL's outlook on fighting for reforms: "people may consider the Party in a good light but not really serious about fighting for reforms" and thus "vote with their feet and leave the Party orbit."\* Rosen continues "We must never be afraid of the mass movement no matter who leads it at any given moment. The only way the Party will ever emerge as the main leader of the mass movement is after the Party has entered into it at the particular level it is at and wins people to advanced politics and into the Party. Party members must be known as organizers around principled issues and willing to work with others who don't agree with them. It is clear that sectarianism is the main factor limiting our growth and preventing serious work in the unions and other mass organizations, and united front actions with other groups."128 (All emphasis is Rosen's.)

This report by Rosen seemed to offer hope for PL, but there were three weaknesses that foretold the eventual defeat of the anti-

\*As an aside note how the oft-used metaphor, "Party orbit," implies the Party as the center of the Universe, or at least of an independent star system.

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Rosen's report prompted the NC meeting in September 1971 to adopt a policy of moving PL back into the unions. The report from the September meeting raised "the urgent need for our members to join and participate in the right-led trade unions" and become "active union members."129 Lenin had pointed out long ago that it was *obligatory* for revolutionaries to work in reactionary led trade unions. PL belatedly heeded Lenin's advice and PL members in NYC, San Francisco and elsewhere began attending union meetings again. While this was a step out of *organizational* isolation from the unions, the serious strategies for *how* to work in the unions, the 1969 trade-union program, was not necessarily the basis of the work. Thus, in most cases the trade-union work failed, although some serious caucuses did develop out of the anti-sectarian period, most notably the PL-led Teachers' Action Caucus in San Francisco. (See below.)

As PL re-entered the unions, the NSC re-introduced the abandoned Communist Party demand of the 1950's, 30 hours work at 40 hours pay, as the vanguard line and main demand PL would advance in the labor movement. This demand, *Challenge* argued, "could unite the employed with the unemployed, strike a massive blow against unemployment," and "would mean a direct cut into the bosses' profits, stolen from worker's labor."130 To have an organizational form through which it could wage a campaign for "30 for 40" PL launched the Workers Action Movement (WAM). WAM immediately set about agitating for "30 for 40" in the unions where PL had members. Petitions were circulated, resolutions submitted

but sectarianism."134

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at union meetings, and in a few locals "30 for 40" was adopted as a desired goal of the local. But WAM, as conceived originally, was supposed to be far more than just an agitational group. WAM was to "become the organizational form for a national caucus movement centered around '30 for 40'."131 This goal was never achieved. Instead of developing serious mass work in the unions around the immediate issues on the job out of which broad rank and file caucuses could have grown and within which WAM could have raised "30 for 40," PL in practice restricted its work to "building WAM and '30 for 40'." By 1973 even caucuses which PL led, such as TAC in AFT Local 61 in San Francisco, were urged to dissolve and convert themselves into WAM chapters. In other caucuses where PL participated but did not have leadership, such as the Traffic Jam Caucus among S.F. phone operators, PL forces were ordered to pull out and concentrate on "building WAM." With this sectarian approach WAM never became the "center" for anything except PL's own trade union members and their friends. By the fall of 1974 Rosen himself admitted that "in effect, many of us became workers for a form of dual unionism. We don't see our work going thru the mass movements."132 WAM never had any serious impact on the unions, yet in electoral activity there was a breakthrough.

During the 60's PL had had some significant success in utilizing electoral work as an agitational tactic in the reform struggle, most notably with the New York - "U'S' Get Out of Vietnam" referendum in 1967 and Rent Control campaigns in San Francisco in 1967-1968. PL achieved some notoriety for the issues and won a few new members around these campaigns. But as part of its drift into isolation in the post 1969 period, PL eschewed electoral work altogether and resurrected the anarchist slogan "Don't Vote-Organize," (as if the two were incompatible) as a major PL line, 133 Lenin in his book Left-Wing Communism had long ago made clear the need for revolutionary Marxists to do electoral work, not as the road to power but in order to "rouse the minds of the masses and draw them into struggle," in order to leave no sphere uncontested to the bourgeoisie. The NSC reopened the question of elections in the NC meeting of December 1971, and proposed that PL again make use of electoral work. A debate broke out in the NC as some, still wedded to the old approach, argued: "Whenever we participate in such elections, no matter how much we 'explain' that we don't believe it will really work, we are helping to strengthen the brainwash." Rosen pointed out that "the main underlying problem during our electoral work in the past was not right opportunism

The NC discussion on elections led PL to attempt electoral referendums for the passage of "30 for 40" laws in 1972-1973. These were attempted in San Francisco, Berkeley, New York, Detroit, and Boston, however, due to the persistent sectarianism and ineptness none got past a half-hearted petition campaign except in Berkeley and San Francisco. In San Francisco, PL and WAM were able to form a fledgling Shorter Work Week Coalition, collect 65,000 signatures to place "30 for 40" on the ballot, and wage a vigorous campaign that visibly frightened the S.F. Chamber of Commerce and drew significant harrassment from the FBI. The slogan of the campaign was "30 for 40: Vote for it! Organize for it!" and campaign literature made clear that only mass struggle by thousands of workers could win and enforce "30 for 40." The idea of "30 for 40" was greatly popularized in the mass campaign and 33,000 (20%) voted for it. This off-the-job electoral campaign turned out to be WAM's most significant and successful effort. However, it cost a tremendous amount of effort by PL members and the very few friends who helped with the campaign. Moreover, no organizational ties were built with the Labor Movement.

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While no serious footing was ever developed in the unions, the struggle against sectarianism led to some positive developments on other fronts. One of PL's rare successes with a significant penetration among the industrial working class developed during this period among immigrant Latin workers in Los Angeles. In the fall of 1971 the California legislature passed the racist Dixon-Arnett law making it a crime for an employer to hire an "illegal" alien. Overnight the livelihood of 200,000 Latin immigrants in the L.A. area was threatened. The main mass organization of immigrant Latinos, CASA, experienced a phenomenal growth - 10,000 dues paying members. PL entered CASA with a very small number of Latin cadre and the mass line of "Abolish the Dixon-Arnett law." The conservatives of CASA had limited their efforts to private meetings with certain legislators and influential clergy. PL cadre, while not attacking these legalistic efforts, arqued that mass struggle was the key to victory. PL took its fighting program to the mass meetings of 500 to 600 Latin workers which took place weekly. PL proposals passed overwhelmingly and PL cadre took the lead in forming a CASA "protest committee" which led a series of mass marches, demonstrations, house meetings and other actions. Two months

of mass struggle, led by PL forces and involving thousands was followed by a victory. Dixon-Arnett was declared unconstitutional. PL's respect and influence amongst immigrant Latin workers, many of whom worked in the huge garment industry, grew tremendously, and for the first time significant numbers of Latin industrial workers joined the Party. But PLP pulled them out of CASA after a brief clash with the leadership and in short order the new Latin members were as isolated as the rest of the Party.

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In the period 1968-1971 PLP was drawn into work within the Army as a number of its members were drafted. At first the Party fought to keep its members out, but later on the Party encouraged the men to go quetly when drafted. The first Army work in 1968-1969 carefully followed the model of the trade-union work and was relatively successful. But by 1970-1971, as in the factory, base-building and caucus building was replaced by anarchist exemplary actions which isolated the PL members from the majority of the soldiers and landed them in the stockades. However, in 1970-1971 there were a number of rebellions in the stockades both in the U.S. and in Vietnam and it seemed that the stockade was the best place for a PL GI. Thus even more isolating actions, purposefully designed to get the PL soldier arrested or dishonorably discharged, were the PL orders of the day. PLP made no serious inroads in the imperialist army, which, by the way, would have been very vulnerable in that period to a serious approach to military work.

PL's army work was in as serious a shambles as its TU work when the struggle against sectarianism was ordered in late 1971 to begin in the Army area too. Well-needed it was, since a number of good PL cadre had quit when they refused to carry out dangerous orders for anarchist actions. Others became burned out by the brutality of the stockade life. The rest were totally isolated from a vigorously growing GI protest movement, the coffee-house movement (a movement to set-up as anti-war centers off-base coffee houses,) and the anti-war organizations of soldiers, sailors and veterans. The first attempts by New York to correct the sectarianism missed the mark and landed all the way into gross right-wing opportunism. The Party proposed an incredibly opportunist campaign to make the Army's court-martial system more democratic. This rightist program was quietly rejected by the Party in Seattle, which directed the Army work at the near-by Fort Lewis. The program at Ft. Lewis was based squarely on fighting racism; the method was to join forces

with existing organizations in and around the military to fight racism. Thus the PL GI cadre allied with the local GI coffee house. hooked up with the national campaign to free Billy Dean Smith; a Black GI accused of fragging (a method used in Vietnam to eliminate pro-war officers,) and formed a chapter of the anti-war national organization VVAW (Vietnam Veterans Against the War) on the base. With the support of the broad off-base forces and with a fighting anti-racist program that helped build a base especially among minority soldiers, a bold but sensible series of actions took place, which in short order made the Ft. Lewis VVAW the most feared organization on the base and one of the most influential GI protest centers on the West Coast. PLP for the first time was able to recruit active-duty GI's. The Ft. Lewis program then became the model for PL's army work. But by late 1973 all of PL's GI's had served their time, and with the end of the draft there were no more enlistments. PL work within the armed forces ended until the Camp Pendleton Campaign in late 1976. (See below).

IV

In 1972 McGovern made ending U.S. involvement in Vietnam and a vague vision of economic justice the two main planks of his program, and his campaign for the Presidency attracted and involved thousands of young activists committed to these goals. Having recently re-evaluated their approach to elections the NSC conceived and developed a skillful approach toward the McGovern campaign which enabled PL to work among and have some serious influence upon the young McGovern activists. PL cadre joined the campaign and a few became leaders of it at the local level. These PL cadre worked hard in the daily activity of the campaign and organized politically around the mass line of "Keep McGovern straight on the issues" and "Democracy in the Campaign." Around this line PL initiated an unofficial caucus-type formation (within the official campaign apparatus) called "Grassroots McGovern Volunteers." At Miami during the national Democratic Party convention, after Mc-Govern made a clearly backsliding speech which mentioned he was in favor of keeping U.S. troops in Thailand, the Grassroots McGovern Volunteers organized a mass meeting of 600 at McGovern's convention headquarters at the Dorval Hotel to demand McGovern retract his statement. McGovern's campaign manager, Gary Hart,\* was forced to attend and had the unpleasant experience of being raked

<sup>\*</sup>Now Senator from Colorado.

over the coals by 600 of his "own people." Later the chapters of this caucus in the San Francisco Bay Area joined with the United Farm Workers (U.F.W.) to organize a mass march in San Francisco against the anti-farmworker initiative, Proposition 22. McGovern and his campaign leaders in the Democratic Party opposed this and began redbaiting the Grassroots McGovern Volunteers declaring that "communists have infiltrated our campaign in San Mateo county, (adjacent to San Francisco)." McGovern and his aides wanted the march stopped but the caucus had a solid base inside his Bay Area organization and solid support from the UFW. Dolores Huerta of the UFW leadership threatened to expose McGovern for vacillating on Proposition 22. McGovern backed down, and the PL caucus and the Farmworkers led a march of 2,000. The efforts of the PL cadre in the McGovern campaign were an example of a Leninist approach to the liberal electoral campaigns which often involve large numbers of well meaning activists, often open to revolutionary politics. A small number of these McGovern activists were involved by the PL forces in study groups and in the Party itself. However, as the campaign developed, "Grassroots McGovern Volunteers" became increasingly isolated from other reform Democratic groups and after the election it died; PLP, for all its good work, was left with no ties with the people active in Democratic politics.

V

In the school year of 1971-1972 the NSC picked up the shell of SDS and made an attempt to bring it back to life. At the time a significant wave of publicity and promotion was being given in academic circles to a dangerous group of racist eugenecists such as Arthur Jensen, Richard Herstein, and William Shockley, PL organized what forces it had left on the campuses, using the vehicle of SDS, to launch a national campaign against the racist professors. While SDS was never revived to even a shadow of its former self, PL student cadre worked hard on agitational campaigns, at times complemented by exemplary actions, exposing the racists and their texts. PL and its short-lived, Boston-based graduate student organization, University Action Group, succeeded in getting resolutions passed in the American Historical Association, the Modern Language Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Economic Association, and the Linguistic Society of North America condemning the racist "theories." PL and SESPA (Scientists & Engineers of Social and Political Action) later succeeded in getting the American Physics Society to "dissociate" itself from physicist Shockley's racist "theories." Unfortunately, PL did not realize the significance of the anti-racist opposition in these professional societies. The activists in these organizations were often intellectuals most open to Left ideas, yet PL was not capable of either following through on contacts made at these meetings or of developing a long range plan for work in these societies.

Occasionally during the spring of 1972, the SDS-led efforts on the campus took on a mass character temporarily, most notably at the University of Iowa when 400 students confronted Hernstein during a speaking engagement. On the whole, however, no significant mass struggle developed against the racist professors. As for SDS, to revive it into a mass organization, assuming that was still possible given what the NSC had done to it since June 1969, would have required a completely self-critical evaluation of why it had died since the split. This, of course, was never even considered. While the racist professors were an issue, they were not the issue; the main issue around which tens of thousands of students would, and did move in the spring of 1972 was still the war in Vietnam.

When Nixon re-escalated the war against Vietnam in the spring of 1972, PLP took the opportunity to re-escalate the verbal attacks on the Vietnamese for negotiating. As the Vietnamese were carrying out an all-out offensive against U.S. imperialism, *Challenge* stated: ". . . if they were really intent on driving the U.S. out of Vietnam altogether they never would have gone to the 'bargaining table' to negotiate with U.S. imperialism in the first place." 135

Naturally with this line the initial response of the NSC was to ignore the war and keep PL's student forces plugging away against the racist professors. At a large national SDS conference on April 1st and 2nd, the war was hardly mentioned 136 Marxist-Leninist elements in the national leadership argued against this abstention from what was the biggest anti-war upsurge since the spring of 1970 (2,500 had voted to strike at Harvard; 3,000 were already on strike and battling the police at Columbia; at Stanford 2,000 took over 3 campus buildings; at Boston U., 3,000 voted to strike until the bombings were stopped.) Under these circumstances and given the current anti-sectarian push, it was possible in a few places for PL and SDS to jump into this anti-imperialist uprising, even to help lead the upsurge, most notably at the U. of Washington and at UCLA, to a lesser extent at San Francisco State, Univ. of Minnessota, Princeton, and Boston U. At U.C. Berkeley, PL played a significant and positive role in the anti-war movement, then led by the Maoist R.U., by raising the level of militancy beyond what the moderate

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R.U. was then willing to allow.

In an attempt to broaden the campaign against the racist "theorists," PL launched the Committee Against Racism (CAR). CAR had a very promising beginning as PL forces succeeded in getting over 1,400 prominent professors and other academics to sponsor the call for the founding conference of CAR. The founding conference itself, due to its broad sponsorship, was a huge success. Over 1,200 students and faculty met at New York University and pledged themselves to CAR's program of "opposing racist 'theories' and practices wherever they exist." A similar conference, though not quite so broad in character, was held on the West coast a few months later. At these early CAR conferences PL made an effort to overcome some of the sectarianism of the SDS anti-racist campaign by emphasizing that CAR was open to all those who wanted to oppose the racists on any level. Also PL recognized the need and possibility for CAR to form united fronts with other forces, particularly minority student and faculty groups, in the anti-racist struggle, When this policy was pursued, as in Los Angeles for a brief period, CAR experienced growth in both numbers and influence in the campus community. At UCLA CAR helped spearhead a very influential Coalition which held off UCLA's planned "Violence Center." During this period some excellent anti-racist literature was produced including the pamphlets "The Myth of Reverse Racism" and "Jensenism: A Closer Look."\* Unfortunately, this approach to building CAR did not last long nor did it ever become widespread in the Party and even at the CAR founding Convention the NSC began the process of narrowing the organization down.

V١

In the spring of 1975 PL's work among farmworkers, which had previously been limited to agitational work on the periphery of that movement, received a big boost when a longtime veteran and respected leader of the farmworkers' movement in the Delano area joined the Party. (He had first contacted PL during the Party's work around Proposition 22 in 1972.) This opened the door to the possibility of serious organizing in the UFW by the PLP. The new Delano organizer and the other NC member responsible for the work in the valley wrote a thoughtful series of articles for Challenge that

\*This was in fact an SDS pamphlet, written by rank and file PL'ers at Berkeley on their own initiative. In fact the conventional wisdom in PL was that it was wrong to discredit Jensen scientifically, as opposed to purely political expose,

traced the political development of the UFW from a working class perspective. The proposed program for developing the UFW into a serious weapon of class struggle against the growers, included ending the reliance on liberal politicians, ending the UFW leaders' collaboration with the Immigration Police and welcoming immigrant workers into the union. The method of work was to include mobilizing and relying upon the initiative and power of rank and file farmworkers through a system of ranch committees and shop stewards that could shut down the fields. This program could have provided the basis for a vibrant rank and file movement in the UFW. But the NSC was quick to pour cold water on this document and its program, criticizing it as "opportunist." The NSC instead urged the Delano comrades to concentrate on selling Challenge at the Saturday flea market in nearby rural towns. Thus the hope of a new movement in the fields was quickly snuffed out.

### VII

In response to the skyrocketing unemployment crisis in 1974-1975 PL undertook to organize two major actions against unemployment, one in California and one in the East. In California the Party leadership employed a united front approach around the mass line of "Jobs Now!" A wide range of forces including caucuses, union locals, student governments, Black and Chicano organizations, welfare rights groups, churches, were won by PL and WAM to send delegates to a planning conference and participate in a March on the State capitol. This united front approach led to a mass march of over 2,000. PLP was clearly in the leadership of this demonstration, the largest nonstudent action ever organized and led by PL in California. The Party leadership in New York City on the other hand, pursued a narrow sectarian policy of building their march with only PL and WAM; the result was a march less than one-fifth as large as the one in California. The disparity between the two marches was so striking that it had a sobering effect on Rosen who wrote self-critically shortly afterwards, "Take the last WAM march in the East. . . In NYC. . . the march was never raised in a single local for adoption. . . the march was poorly organized by a few party leaders in the office. Superficially the march was called WAM but in fact it was only the Party. . . Almost no other group, caucus, etc. was asked to co-sponsor the march. There was no united front. . . in NYC our work in the TU's has narrowed down, because I have allowed the comrades to wander too far away from the UF approach. . ."137 The differences reflected in the two unemployment marches were a prelude, unbeknownst to

those involved at the time, to an eventual head-on clash between the S.F. leadership and the NSC over the question of united-front strategy and tactics.

## VIII

Attempting to draw some lessons from the experience of the unemployment marches and from some positive on-the-job work in S.F., the two San Francisco leaders, Jim Dann and Hari Dillon, submitted two reports to the January 1975, meeting of the NC on the question of United Front. The reports argued that "while our cadre are dedicated and often bold" the Party "lags far behind in understanding the nature of united front work. . . the problem of UF is the key problem we have to solve in the mass movement. . . a truly broad UF is not a neat package. . . but includes a wide range of Forces. Thus a healthy and complex process of unity/struggle/unity constantly transpires."138 Most significantly, the reports referred back to the experiences of PL in the 1960's and called for re-opening discussion and evaluation of the four retreats (put more tactfully in the reports as "PL's role" at San Francisco State, the anti-war movement, and SDS) as part of a general self-critical Party-wide discussion on united front and PL's work in the mass movement.

Rosen on his part issued a report in which, while bowing to the need to "broaden out our work" argued that the main problem in the Party's work "is right opportunism, not only in the long run but in the immediate" (Rosen's emphasis). Rather than seriously and self-critically examine the errors in PL's strategy Rosen argued the problem was "the leadership doesn't hold the line" for the "agreed upon strategy" such as WAM and CAR.139

Rosen and W. Linder met with the two San Francisco leaders the day before the NC meeting to discuss the differences regarding strategy. Rosen declared that the death of SDS resulted not from pursuing the narrow CWSA, but because CWSA was not "pursued enough;" he defended PL's walk out of the anti-war movement because the anti-war movement did not involve the working class.\* While avoiding dealing with the S.F. State Strike specifically, he argued that the loss of many Black cadre in 1968-1970 was due to to their nationalism, not PL's racist deviations from Marxism-Leninism on the national question. 140 Dann and Dillon, while not agree-

\*This was not true in the 1969-1971 period, and even to the extent that it was true earlier it is quite beside the point. You can't change the nature of a movement by walking out of it.

ing with Rosen's line and never actually recanting their views, nevertheless did retreat and did not press the issue at the general meetings of the NC the next day. Three factors led Dann and Dillon to retreat in this manner: (1) their perception of their political differences with the line of the NSC were fragmented and incomplete; (2) Rosen, while staunchly defending PL's past errors, made bows toward correcting present errors in strategy; (3) the distorted way in which democratic centralism was practiced by the NSC made it impossible for Dillon and Dann to press for a Party-wide discussion on PL's strategy without being "guilty" of factionalizing against the line of the NC and "undermining the Party's strategy."

Rosen, while sharply attacking Dann's report as "right-wing," praised the "Jobs March" in California. Nevertheless he insisted on his line that right opportunism is the main error. The only proposal to come out of the meeting was a recruiting drive to double the membership of PL in the next year and thus make PL into more of a "mass party."141

At the following NC meeting in March 1975, Dillon again attempted to re-open the crucial question of the San Francisco State strike by submitting a report which though mild compared to what was warranted, was sharper in regard to S.F. State than the two reports submitted by him and Dann at the previous NC. The report stated that "the primary aspect of the strike demands was progressive and anti-racist" (this was antithetical to the NSC position) and that PL's opposition to preferential admissions of minority students was "a serious racist error on the part of the NSC."142 Rosen replied that the NSC had been "correct" at San Francisco State and that Dillon's position was a "capitulation to nationalism." Rosen attacked Dillon for "assaulting the line of the Party" and declared his report to be a prime example of "right-opportunism within the National Committee." Rosen then recessed the meeting without discussion.143

IX

Ironically as the Party's base shrunk to one-tenth its former size during the 1967-1971 period, the Party membership itself had increased, and there was a greater spread geographically as well. At the time of the founding Convention in 1965 there were about 200 members; this grew steadily to about 325 at the time of the 1968 Convention, about one-half in New York, one-fifth in San Francisco, almost all the rest in Boston, Chicago and Los Angeles. But the successful struggle in SDS brought a whole new crop of young activists around PLP, many of whom ironically joined PLP because, as SDS died, they

had no organization. By the time of RTR III PL's membership numbered about 440. Now besides a new club in Detroit, there were PL organizers (ex-SDS'ers) who formed the nuclei of future clubs in Houston, Minneapolis, Seattle, Kansas City, Cleveland, San Diego, St. Louis, Washington D.C. and Pittsburgh. During the anti-sectarian period these nuclei were able to transform themselves into small but stable clubs. PLP continued its slow steady growth, growing mainly in these new areas until most new areas had at least 10 members, when the split with Boston occurred. Just before the split PLP counted some 520 members. The loss of Boston dropped PL's membership to 400, but the big recruiting drive of 1975 made good the loss and then some. At the time of the May 1975 meeting, the NC counted 708 members, half of them from NY and San Francisco. There were all sorts of wild projections based on this modest success. Rosen promised 1,000 members before the year was out. The NC upped that projection and agreed to re-double the membership by October 1975, and try for 2,000 by the end of 1975. The count at the NC of October, 1975, however, was disappointing. The most high-pressured recruiting campaign in PL's history (with the most liberal membership requirements) produced a virtually static situation. There were only 763 members counted, not the 1400 promised in May. However, more rapid growth was expected by the NC if more pressure were applied. The Minneapolis section claimed to have almost tripled in size in the 5 month period by using all-night struggle sessions with new prospects. This was seen as a national model. Mort Scheer proposed a "realistic" goal of 25,000 by 1980. and this was agreed to by the NC as well as the intermediate goal of 2,000 by May, 1977. None of this materialized; 763 was as large as PLP was destined to grow. It was all downhill after that. A shrinking base of friends of the Party was eventually milked dry and even the most high-pressured recruiting could not keep pace with attrition.\*

The call by the NC for a more mass approach to recruitment had both good and bad aspects. PL had always been saddled with an elitist recruitment policy that set stricter criteria for *joining* the Party than for being a member or leader of the Party. The "new" approach by PL was really a return to the three basic guidelines for membership in the Bolshevik Party: agreement with the general line and strategy of the Party; agreement to meet and function in a Party unit; and agreement to help sustain the Party financially. (In prac-

tice, however, many new members never met with a club.) Adopting this approach enabled PL to recruit many people who had been close to the Party for some time but had been prevented from joining due to PL's elitism.

The shortcoming in the "mass recruiting campaign" lay primarily in the fact that it was viewed as the strategic answer to how the Party would become qualitatively more mass in character and thus able to play a significant role in the class struggle. It circumvented the fundamental problem of PL's isolation from the mass movement in general, and in the trade unions in particular. Thus, once the few people already around the Party were recruited, the growth of the Party once again came to a standstill. But of course nothing stands still for very long. Losses of many of the new members began in 1976 and whittled the membership down rapidly. This was made painfully clear by the January 1977, NC meeting when Rosen reported that "we recruited nearly 100 members in New York City in the mass recruiting drive and by now almost all have quit." 144 After the 1977 split with San Francisco Party group, PLP's membership was down to 430, a little less than it had been in 1971. 145

X

The struggle against sectarianism in PL was doomed to fail from the beginning because the struggle never came to grips with the theoretical basis of PL's isolation from the mass movement. RTR III. RTR III is full of talk about winning the masses "directly to socialism" and attacks on the Bolsheviks for the various mass lines they put forward - self-determination for national minorities, bread, land and peace, and for giving priority to achieving a "higher standard of living" for the workers and peasants after the Bolshevik revolution. In RTR III the NSC in essence rejected the scientific Marxist outlook on why the masses make revolution (in order to rid themselves of the material oppression of capitalism). Only utopian socialists and anarchists think that high ideals are enough to produce revolution. Based on this understanding Marxist-Leninists have always recognized the necessity of organizing around a mass line which embodies the burning desires of the masses at the moment. Marxist-Leninists cannot limit their efforts to purely agitational and propaganda work; the workers cannot be convinced by propaganda and agitation alone. A distinction must be made between agitational slogans and the slogans of action. "If the call to action properly and aptly formulates the demands of the masses, and if the time is really ripe for it, it is usually taken up by the broad masses of toilers. To confuse slogans

<sup>\*</sup>All figures are from notes taken at NC meetings of May, 1975 and October 1975. This was the first time NC members were given honest membership figures. The innovation stopped in 1976, when membership began to plummett.

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with directives or an agitational slogan with a slogan of action, is as dangerous as premature or belated action which is sometimes fatal."146 The NSC never came close to grasping and acting on the fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist strategy and tactics during its half-hearted struggle against sectarianism. While "30 for 40" was a valid agitational slogan, it was never the burning issue of the day that would make it a "slogan of action." Thus PL restricted its worker in the unions in the main to "propaganda and agitation alone." The change during the anti-sectarian period too often only meant that instead of "hawking" *Challenge*, PL members hawked "30 for 40." The result was indeed politically "fatal" for PL.

This first error in strategy led logically to the NSC's second major deviation from what has always been an essential component of Marxist-Leninist strategy and tactics, the united front: "A most important basic part of the tactics of the Communist Parties is the tactic of the united front, as a means toward the most successful struggle against capital, towards the class mobilization of the masses and the exposure and isolation of the opportunist leaders."147 Since in the trade unions the NSC wanted to limit the *line* around which PL members worked to "30 for 40," it followed logically that the organizational form was limited to WAM. The building of broad united front caucuses was discouraged.

The end result, indeed the essence of all this, was the abandonment by PLP of the goal of power. In RTR III PL attacked the Bolsheviks and CCP for the necessary strategic steps those parties took to achieve and consolidate power. The four retreats by PL. while at first glance demonstrating only fear of both revisionism and the masses, in essence reflected PL's total fear of leading a fighting mass movement that could do serious battle with the ruling class immediately, and eventually challenge the rulers for power. While Marxist-Leninist parties have always sought to achieve power even to the point of refusing to allow its cadre to hold the position of shop steward. PL opposed the goal of power in one union local from the same theoretical precepts from which RTR III in essence attacked the concept of power in one country. Thus we can see a direct connection between PL's infantile 'leftist' tactics and its anarchist opposition in theory to the dictatorship of the proletariat. "Revisionism begins with the seizure of power." Of course this turns Marxism inside out. As Lenin pointed out, the seizure of power by the proletariat is the watershed between Marxism and opportunism. Revisionism begins with the abandonment of this fundamental goal.

The Marxist-Leninist forces in PL attempted as best they could within the framework of PL's general line to take advantage of the

anti-sectarian period to halt and reverse PL's drift into anarchistic isolation. To the extent they succeeded locally, PL occasionally had a positive effect in the class struggle. Also, the Marxist-Leninist forces at times attempted to open discussion on PL errors in the past relating to the anti-war, student, and Black movements. But these forces only dimly perceived the connection between the anarchist, utopian line of RTR III and PL's isolation from the masses and thus lacked the political clarity to wage an all-out struggle against the NSC. Moreover, they knew that the entrenched leadership would expel them forthwith if they did more than meekly raise questions or try to get around the NSC line in the local areas. All the West Coast leaders in the 1971-77 period were to one degree or other opposed to the NSC line, and, therefore, a better, less sectarian united front approach obtained in San Francisco, Berkeley, Seattle, and Los Angeles. Only in those four cities was there significant PL action around the Hanoi-Haiphong bombings (1972); only in San Francisco and Berkeley were successful electoral "30 for 40" campaigns built (1973); only in California was a successful March for Jobs built (1974-1975). San Francisco teachers work was far broader and more successful than in New York City. But the West Coast leaders were saddled with carrying out the isolationist NC line and actually, the situation on the West Coast was only slightly better than in New York. This flexibility for the West Coast and token NSC opposition to sectarianism were enough to keep the Marxist-Leninist forces hopeful that PL would improve and busy in their local futilely trying to build a mass movement headed by the sectarian, area PLP.

The smaller areas in the Mid-West were less supervised by New York and were allowed to indulge in a slightly longer perspective and to do more base building. Even in New York there were areas of work, not under the direct supervision of the national office where a rank and file member could do some relatively broad work and carry out elements of a communist line. That is why it was possible in this period for serious revolutionaries to maintain themselves in the Party, to ignore the sectarian NSC line and not take Challenge too seriously. Thus good work was done in the "30 for 40" and, later, in the unemployment campaigns in San Francisco, in the Army work in Seattle, in student work at a number of West Coast, Minnesota and Boston campuses, among undocumented workers in Los Angeles, farmworkers in California, teachers, carpenters and phone workers in San Francisco, welfare workers in Chicago, and in some other areas. Only on the West Coast did NC members actually encourage a broader type of work, but in some areas other local

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leaders and rank and file members (in New York City only the latter) maintained their committment by struggling to carry out communist work.

All this was in contradiction to the anarchist line of RTR III and the sectarian politics of *Challenge* and in time the piper had to be paid. As long as RTR III was the unchallenged general line of PLP and the Rosen clique the unchallenged, entrenched leadership, the non-sectarian work existed only as an anomoly tolerated by the NSC. This tolerance ended soon enough.

#### **CHAPTER 9**

# **INGLORIOUS ISOLATION 1973-1977**

The struggle against sectarianism in PLP started with the publication of the article, "Fight Sectarianism" (PL V. 8 No. 3) by the NC, alongside RTR III in a weak attempt to counter the sectarian implications of RTR III in the summer of 1971, and was pursued with vigor at the October, 1971 NC meeting, which pressed PL cadre to re-enter the trade-unions and even to run for shop steward, and again at the December 1971 NC meeting, which called for PL to take electoral action and which founded WAM. The year 1972 saw the highpoint of PLP's attempt to re-develop a mass approach. That was the year of the attempt to revive SDS, the founding of CAR, the new line on Army work, the McGovern Campaign, the re-constitution of industrial clubs and shop clubs, WAM in its broadest and most vigorous phase, and the first "30 for 40" electoral campaign.

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The first sign that the NSC was not about to carry a good thing too far came in 1973 during the pre-convention discussion. An NC report to open the discussion was drafted by Dann and approved by the NC at the Dec. 1972, meeting. The report, while praising RTR III's line on China as prophetic, criticized the sectarianism of the 1969-1971 era and drew attention to the united front as the method of leading the mass movement.

"Nevertheless as the line of Road to Revolution III unfolded in our Party, many members and even the leadership in some areas "developed" this line further. Not only were Meany, Woodcock and Bridges sellouts and enemies, but also all the local union leaders and even shop stewards became one big mass of undifferentiated reaction. The line was even put forward by the Party in some areas that it was inevitable that one would sell out if he became a local union official. While it is true that many local officials and some shop stewards do have cozy relations with the boss, this line that refused to recognize even the possibility of militants and class conscious fighters at the local official level, or even the shop steward level was rejected by most workers as contrary to their experience. And in practice, no matter what was said, this made it impossible to form a united front that had a serious approach toward taking power in the union.

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"To the extent that Road to Revolution III may not have spelt out clearly that the object of a united front is to take power in a give situation, it may have had a negative impact on our mass work. We gave a long list of types we would not ally with: "bosses," "revisionists," "Trotsky-types" and the "herd of various fakes on the left," groups that would not "separate themselves from the policies of their liberal-imperialist or revisionist 'leaders'," trade-union misleaders, Black misleaders, etc. Yet since there are practically no stable groups that don't have one or more of these types in them, in practice this often reduced our united front work to building Challenge Clubs or building SDS on a very narrow basis. Only a very few people at this point are willing to separate themselves completely from revisionists, Trotskyites, union misleaders, and government money and work exclusively with PLP. If the majority of workers were willing, it would be a very advanced situation.

"The main mistake of the United Front since the time of Dimitroff, is viewing the question of united front work being with whom we unite instead of around what line we unite. In this respect Road to Revolution III was not helpful. We criticized the past practice and attributed it to top-down alliances — so we called for a "united front below." This is a narrow approach and misses the point. Below, above, or some combination of the two — the question is what line are we uniting around?

"Thus, did SDS split around the line of Worker-Student Alliance or did we make the split around unnecessary side issues such as the Black Panthers and the NLF or the merits of Mao-Tse-Tung vs. Ho Chi Minh? Did we narrow the UF by interpreting the WSA in too narrow a form (strike support, Campus Worker-Student Alliance) instead of seeing that the essence of WSA must be students fighting ruling class ideology on the campus, in particular — racism."

(PLP Convention Bulletin, no. 1)

At the next NC meeting, March, 1973 J. Israel began a sharp attack on the report; he defended the sectarianism of the "Challenge Summer" period and castigated the report for limiting the struggle against revisionism. Israel said the main danger was a strong rightwing trend in the Party, a trend that would tend to compromise with revisionism and nationalism. Rosen spoke next and strongly seconded Israel's remarks. Rosen said he never agreed with the report and wished he had said so at the time. He opposed the idea of uniting with leaders of the mass movement and called for focusing the preconvention discussion on what he and Israel called the right-wing trend. 148 The rest of the NC jumped on the bandwagon and it was agreed Dann would publish a retraction in the next internal bulletin.\*

\*Not exactly a retraction, but a self-criticism was published by Dann in the PLP Convention Bulletin No. 4.

The "Right-wing drift" became an intimidating watchword now which was conveniently used to foil rank and file criticisms of *Challenge was a* left-wing island in an ocean of the right-wing drift of the Party.149\*

In his own report Rosen summarized his and Israel's differences with Dann's report:

"At the last NC meeting the main point discussed was the 'right-wing-drift. . .' This retreat brought into question our concepts of UF policy. In the original draft for opening the pre-Convention discussion our earlier UF line was altered to consider this more from a top down view than from a bottom up. . . Probably the most important weakness was the limited leadership of the NC, and in some cases the outright disregard for NC decisions. . . and various members of the NC — mentioned at the meeting . . . sharply contributed to this trend."150

From here on the struggle against sectarianism was forgotten in the struggle against the "right-wing drift" led by Rosen and Israel. As the pre-convention discussion developed, rank and file dissatisfaction with the leadership on a number of issues arose. The Party leadership was faulted for ignoring the women's movement, for ignoring cultural work. From several quarters the Party's refusal to see U.S. imperialism as the main enemy of the people of the world drew fire. The dissention was voiced by some of the second ranking leaders in New York and around Eric Johnson, Dillon, K. Kelly, and some other leaders as well as many members in San Francisco. The proposal of the NSC to have teachers work based solely on the need to shorten the teachers' work week was almost unanimously opposed in San Francisco. This proposal was correctly seen as a retreat from the struggle against racism and from the struggle to fight the bourgeois content of education. That proposal would surely lead to the isolation of teachers from the community. The NSC proposal to stop using Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin or Mao in PL study groups was opposed by some of the New York and some of the San Francisco second-ranking leadership as well as by the Canadian Party of Labor.

In these circumstances only the Boston Party stood solidly for the NSC's "Struggle Against the Right Wing Drift" and Rosen leaned more and more heavily on Israel. More and more Boston articles dominated the pre-Convention discussion bulletins until the last three bulletins were sent by Rosen to Boston to be edited there. At an NC meeting just prior to the Convention, where all NC members

<sup>\*</sup>See Appendix.

were bound to fight for the NSC line at the Convention, Rosen and Israel announced their joint plan to transfer all the controversial issues — sexism, cultural work, use of Marxist-Leninist literature (except that regarding teachers) to one workshop which was heavily larded with loyal Boston delegates. 151 The teachers' issue was entrusted to the T-U workshop, but some leading San Francisco opponents of the NSC line were excluded from that workshop. By use of these manuevers the Rosen-Israel leadership silenced the dissidents and the "Struggle Against the Right-Wing Drift" became the official catchword of the June 1973 Convention. In the practical work this meant the final scuttling of SDS, the abandonment of "30 for 40" electoral work, a severe narrowing down of the point of unity in CAR and WAM, and an almost fatal blow to the teacher's work. At this point the struggle against sectarianism became a dead letter in PLP.

When Rosen and Israel came to the parting of the ways at the end of the same year, Israel decided that the problem in PLP was that the "Struggle Against the Right-Wing Trend" had not been carried through to the end. He identified the San Francisco Party, led by John Harris and Hari Dillon as the center of the "Right-Wing Trend." He claimed to be carrying out Rosen's line better than Rosen. There was a correct logic to Israel's thinking that was not so obvious then.

Thus ended the two year trend in PL to reverse sectarianism and come out of isolation. Now PL went from bad to worse. Some milestones along the way were the retreats from (1) the auto work, (2) the teachers' work, (3) the support for Puerto Rican independence, and (4) from the anti-racist struggle in Boston.

11

In the late summer of 1973 the auto plants in Detroit seethed with militancy. The record high sales of autos that year caused most of the plants to be running at forced overtime; management let safety go out the window in the rush to make production. In Chrysler's antiquated plants in Downtown Detroit conditions were even worse. There was no ventilation in the unseasonably hot August weather. Moreover, Chrysler was the expected target for that year's UAW strike. In a bold action two Black workers had started a wildcat sit in on July 24 at the Chrysler Jefferson Assembly Plant in Detroit and won some improvements in safety. Earlier, on June 14, there had been a wildcat at Chrysler's Warren Truck Assembly Plant in Detroit. And on August 6, there was a six-day wildcat at Chrysler's Detroit Forge.

For over a year the PL national leadership had declared auto to be

the main PL concentration. They were determined to make their mark upon the 1973 strike since PL's auto concentration had failed miserably in the previous strike in 1970. Intense pressure was put on the dozen or so PL auto workers. Both Linder and national auto concentration leader, Walt Riley, were in almost daily phone contact with PL's handful of auto workers. Under these circumstances the PL member at Chrysler's Mack Avenue Plant in Detroit decided on a wildcat sit-down to protest deteriorating safety conditions and lack of ventilation. Wildcat was in the air at all Detroit Chrysler plants and with the aid of another militant the line at Mack Ave. was shut down and a sit-down organized on August 14. After 20 hours of occupation the police came and it was clear to the 30 workers left inside that the plant could not be held. They walked out. PLP cadre from all over Michigan joined some Mack Ave. workers in setting up a picket line, which initially succeeded in keeping the bulk of the workers out. But the UAW on Aug. 16 organized hundreds of full-time union officials and others beholden to the machine to go to Mack, and they easily smashed the PL/WAM picket lines. The workers at Mack Avenue by and large were not ready to defend PL or its picket and the wildcat ended with PL forces and all other militants fired.

The Mack Ave. Wildcat was in many aspects a correct action. It is always important to take bold actions against the bosses. But there were serious weaknesses in it as well. Lack of united front ties with UAW committeement, overmilitant posturing by outside PL forces, and lack of deep enough ties with the workers doomed the wildcat to certain failure once the UAW leaders determined to crush it. Instead of analyzing these weaknesses and thus arriving at a balanced assessment of the good and the bad about Mack Avenue, the PL national leadership seized upon it as a bold, revolutionary action and as a brilliant example of fighting the "right-wing drift." The most blatant exagerations were told about Mack Avenue. Riley sent all sorts of inflated reports to New York which were picked up and shamelessly embellished by Challenge and the NSC. The West Coast WAM Conference that Fall was told that there was a WAM chapter of 125 workers still at Mack Ave., when the truth was not a single WAM sympathizer survived. Mack Avenue became a PL legend but one that was destined to help return PL to the path of anarchistic exemplary action. In the wake of Mack Avenue struggling against sectarianism became more difficult. After some more exemplary actions and the layoff of the winter of 1973-4, PL lost almost all of its inside auto cadre, and the PL "main concentration" became a dead letter by Spring of 1974. Thus

Mack Avenue was not the harbinger of further bold PL-led actions but rather PLP's last hurrah in auto. The "struggle against the right-wing drift" led to promoting the anarchistic aspects of a struggle, and to sweeping under the rug the need for unity with union forces and deeper ties with the workers. All this came under PL's mass slogans of the time "Be Bold," "Remember Mack, Fight Back," which only served to cover up PL's retreat from the auto concentration. To gain significant penetration in the UAW would have required patient base-building and flexible united front tactics. PLP was unwilling to consider this, and the ultra-left rhetoric about the lessons of Mack Avenue was a smokescreen which hid the abandonment of auto work altogether. Exit PLP from Auto, stage ultra left.

111

In the high tide of the anti-sectarian push in 1972 PL and other anti-racist forces organized two significant and broad-based caucuses within the San Francisco Teacher's Union, the Teachers' Action Caucus (TAC) and the Substitute Caucus which rapidly became a powerful and influential opposition, not only within the San Francisco local, but also within the state-wide Federation. The caucuses were organized primarily to fight racism and to improve education and only secondarily for economic demands. Nevertheless, at times one-third of the unionized teachers, who voted, voted for the TAC slate, and the majority of the substitutes and the paraprofessionals followed the caucuses in opposition to the local machine, headed by James Ballard. But by late 1973 the push was on to fight the Right-Wing Drift. During the April, 1974 teachers' strike the San Francisco leadership was put under tremendous pressure by the NSC to "Be Bold" and to follow the example of Mack. The leader of the San Francisco Teacher's work, Kitty Kelly, described the situation:

At the time of the 1974 strike the big ideological push in PL's trade union work was the idea that we had to "lead" everything rather than function as a "loyal opposition." We led a number of mass independent actions and in fact, according to many sources, we called the strike. But suddenly leading became equated with seizing microphones and taking over meetings, whether or not there was any basis for doing this. The primary question of the NSC throughout this strike became "Did you take over the meeting today?" This outlook had two aspects: a) The NSC argued that communists are never elected to power — they must seize power. The missing element in this analysis was a realistic estimate of the

situation. Were the masses of teachers willing to follow us in seizing Ballard's power? Every indication said they were not, but in spite of this we attempted to lead a series of coups — "taking over the union office," "organizing a counter-strike committee" instead of focusing on building the strike at our schools; developing the fragile unity between minority and white teachers who were on strike together for once; and organizing massive parent support which was what the strike most needed. Misestimating the timing of the seizure of power is as serious a fault as never attempting to seize power at all. b) Every tactical question was elevated to a principle. Inner-party struggle focused on how to screw up one's courage enough to ignore our horrified fellow workers and seize the microphone on every occasion. And all struggle between the Party and the masses came to revolve about whether to take over this or that.

The NSC made no attempt at a serious analysis of the Schools nor any evaluation based on practice. As a result the line shifted on almost every important question on the average of once every six months: PL started organizing caucuses and then the leadership began arguing that WAM was more important. Then they began organizing mainly around anti-racist issues and an attack was launched on them for not accepting "30 for 40" as the main issue for teachers. PL teachers organized around educational issues for a time and then the pamphlet "Racism, Intelligence and the Working Class" was issued which argued that being able to read isn't very important anyway since reading is "anti-social." There was a struggle to re-enter the unions and then a sharp swing away from the teacher's union because "parents weren't in it." PL teachers around the country began participating in the National AFT conventions, and then orders came down to organize "counter-conventions" in the sessions of the convention. And all of this proceeded with no regard for practice.

Just another flip of the baton in New York. Within short order the San Francisco caucuses shrunk in size and influence, until in 1975 orders were received from New York to abolish the caucuses in favor of a Party fraction. The local Party leadership didn't have the heart to transmit these orders but in essence the caucuses died anyway, although TAC kept a shadowy name — only existence until the split in 1977. Even though the local leadership was sympathetic to a broad united front approach, and tried to ignore the Party's anarchist strategy, the sectarian NSC line won out, because it was not explicitly fought.

IV

PLP had been committed to fight for the independence of Puerto Rico by its founding convention. But even then PL's relations with

the mainstream of the independence movement were cooling off and eventually became frigid. The extreme Left of the independistas were friendly to PL. These forces in Puerto Rico congealed under the name Liga Socialista Puertoriquena (LSP) led by Juan Antonio Corretjer, a famous nationalist hero in Puerto Rico and one of Puerto Rico's leading Marxists. Through the influence of Corretier PLP gained serious footing among Puerto Ricans in New York, although in the late sixties all the Puerto Rican PLP Party leaders like Dejesus, quit one by one. But in Puerto Rico the Liga sold 2,000 Challenges each issue. The Liga itself pursued a fairly sectarian policy by refusing to unite with the main independentistas, the MPI (now the PSP, Puerto Rican Socialist Party) but was by no means willing to follow PLP into its total isolation of the 1971 period. The Liga continued serious trade-union work, maintained a leading position in the very big Puerto Rican anti-Vietnam-war movement and supported the idea of national liberation for Puerto Rico even when PLP had abandoned these policies.

Thus by the time of RTR III, PLP and the Liga were pursuing two different lines on a number of fronts. Since PLP was now almost totally isolated internationally, the Party was in no hurry to make yet another international enemy and PL and the Liga maintained friendly relations despite the divergent politics. During the antisectarian period the Liga must have become hopeful that some convergence between PL's politics and the Liga's would take place, since PLP was now re-entering the trade-union movement and making some moves around the anti-war movement. Thus Corretjer attended the 1973 Convention and gave a rousing speech of solidarity. However, at this convention the basic differences between the Liga on the one hand and PLP and the CPL on the other around the question of self-determination, independence and national liberation surfaced.

For years PL had made no mention at all of independence for Puerto Rico, to the point where the LSP wondered if PL still supported the concept for an independent Puerto Rico. Moreover, when the LSP initiated a campaign against the imperialist plot to turn parts of the island into a superport for the U.S. oil tankers, PLP scoffed at this anti-U.S. imperialist action instead of supporting it in the spirit of internationalism. The differences emerged sharply in one meeting during the winter of 1973-1974, and PLP and the LSP went their separate ways amid much recrimination.152 Toward the end PLP made some moves to split the Liga, but with no success -Correjter's prestige was far greater than that of PL in Puerto Rico.

The PLP position on Puerto Rico soon became equivalent to a colonialist position. Never mentioning independence or self-determination for Puerto Rico, totally hostile to all the left forces in Puerto Rico, PL was, by ommission at least, in effect in favor or maintaining U.S. domination. In early 1977 a Challenge article, mentioning Puerto Rico for the first time in years, warned Puerto Ricans, suffering under the heel of U.S. colonialism, of the dangers of Soviet domination(!!!!)153

V

At the beginning of 1974, bleeding from the loss of Boston, yet determined more than ever to struggle against the "Right-Wing Trend" (of engaging in mass struggle), the Party conceived of a plan to engage all efforts of the Party for four months on building a May Day Demonstration, totally isolated from mass class struggle. The result was a national May Day in Washington D.C. and a huge flop. Billed as "historic" and a mighty blow to the ruling class, the two-week May Day East, Mid-West and Canada in Washington turned out to be a big embarrassment to the organizers. It tended to be ignored by the media as insignificant, which it was, and the workers at the various auto plants along the way regarded the motorcade with either only curiosity at the weirdness of it all, or in some cases with downright hostility. Nevertheless as the all-out superhuman efforts were made to turn out reluctant members for this colossal waste of time the May Day of 1974 did achieve what "Challenge Summer" of 1970 achieved, a general exit from serious T-U work or serious united front work. PLP was now moving back into total isolation.

Shortly before this march, John Harris was sent to Boston to try to reconstitute the Party there. He arrived a few months prior to the beginning of court-ordered bussing. A neo-fascist organization named ROAR (Restore Our Alienated Rights) had terrified much of white, Irish, South Boston into supporting its open appeals to racism and its literally violent opposition to school integration. The radical and liberal establishment in Boston (including the remnants of Israel's group) were afraid to meet ROAR head on. Harris, however, who had been trained in the bloody confrontations of the SNCC-led Civil Rights Movement from Cambridge, Md., to Mississippi knew just what to do. Encouraged (long distance) by the NSC, Harris led ten brave PL'ers to go right down on the opening day of school to South Boston to welcome the bussed Black students, this in the face of a savage mob of 1,000 racists. Some were injured but PLP was again on the map in Boston. Moreover, the liberals (NAACP and SWP) were finally moved to try to do something about the

"racists on a rampage" (ROAR). At this point had Harris followed his instincts PL though small could have entered a united front with the NAACP on some footing, thanks to the courageous action at South Boston High, and from there influenced in an ongoing way, thousands of anti-racists. But the "Struggle Against the Right-Wing Drift" forbade it, and Harris was closely supervised by New York. Thus PLP remained isolated from the mainstream of the movement, while the NAACP marched tens of thousands in Boston several times.

A double thrust was conceived by the NSC in order to counter the liberals, since PL by 1975 was beyond anything but the utmost hostility to any liberal misleaders, real or potential: (1) a May Day march in the heart of South Boston and (2) a Boston Summer Project. To Harris was left the execution of the May Day March, and the job was done excellently. Some 2,000 assembled from all over the East (more than double the 1974 May Day turnout). Before the busses arrived Harris led the PLP marshalls in a physical rout of some 100 or so ROAR thugs, and the march courageously wound its way through the outskirts of South Boston to an integrated neighborhood amid much police provocation and repeated stonings by ROAR thugs.

For the summer project, however, Harris was shunted aside. Responsibility was originally entrusted to a group of inept Mid-Western professors, who ostensibly constituted the CAR leadership. However, these proved incapable of organizing anybody to come to Boston or making any on-the-spot arrangements. (The professors had not the least intentions of participating themselves.) Therefore, Janet Foley, PL's student co-ordinator was entrusted with on-the-spot leadership; this was logical because despite the "CAR" sign-board virtually all participants were PL members. Foley was both capable and courageous, two qualities necessary for the task, and might have achieved some success, except for inept interference from New York and from the Mid-Western professors and except for PL's defeatist sectarian line.

The whole question of leadership in the Boston Summer was the example of PL's methods of internal leadership and how in practice this led all power to be concentrated in Milt Rosen's hands. John Harris was Party leader in Boston, but since all Party work there was in the Boston Summer Project he had no real leadership role except to advise. The project was led by CAR but the CAR chairman left Wisconsin only once for a brief visit and the professor who was the NC member in charge of CAR work never left Detroit. In Boston itself (also nationally) there were virtually no CAR leaders who were not also PL members. Janet Foley was the leader of the PL forces in the Summer Project, who amounted to 95% of the participants,

with Bob Leonhardt as some kind of co-equal independent leader in charge of Harvard work. Such a complex organizational chart for leading only 100 people would have in any other organization led to mass confusion but all internal conflicts were solved easily by the simple procedure of "I'll call Milt and see what he says." Rosen, of course, was the final arbitrator of all disputes and from his bunker in New York was the real general. 154

The best work was the door-to-door agitation in South Boston of whites, previously terrorized by the ROAR racists. Equally good were a series of sharp physical confrontations with the thugs which helped immensely to sap ROAR's aura of invincibility. But their project was unable to develop a mass line and a mass approach nor was it able to unite with the mainstream of the anti-racist movement in Boston. Thus virtually no Bostonians were drawn into activity, no reforms were achieved, and no ties were developed that could last. The PL project participants remained totally isolated from Boston's black community and antagonistic to the anti-racist organizations that were able to mobilize thousands for a march. In the end there was a spontaneous Black rebellion in Roxbury, but the PL project was alienated from it and played no direct role. Towards the end of the summer there was another mass NAACP march in which PL participated as a contingent hostile to the majority of the marchers. No Bostonians, white or black, were recruited to PL or CAR, and when the majority of PL members returned home at the end of the period, a rapid retreat began.

Since the project was unable to establish even minimal ties with Boston's black community and other anti-racist forces, the physical confrontations with ROAR's thugs ceased once the shock troops left in September. Janet Foley, herself, quit the Party that fall (John Harris had been moved to New York earlier) leaving the on-the-spot leadership in the hands of the cautious Leonhardt. The work in South Boston ceased and no further confrontations with ROAR took place after Foley's departure. Thus the essence of the summer project was a series of brave but isolated exemplary actions, that might have been useful if tied to the work of building a mass movement. But in and of themselves they were without lasting significance and the situation in Boston as far as PL was concerned returned to status quo antebellum.

VI

The WAM organization reached its highpoint in early 1973; the issue of "30 for 40" excited a number of advanced workers and al-

most 2,000 attended WAM Conventions that year. But the "Struggle Against the Right-Wing Drift" took its toll on WAM in the second half of 1973 and in 1974, as WAM was saddled with an increasingly narrow line WAM chapters dried up. The "30 for 40" campaigns ceased, and there was little if anything in the way of WAM activity. WAM's line, originally only "30 for 40" and union democracy, became increasingly the PL line in all its aspects, becoming both more sectarian and anarchistic. Therefore the logical conclusion was to abolish WAM altogether. (This was not a problem since there never had been any WAM leaders not also in the Party.)

At the May, 1975 NC meeting Linder gave a report on the declining PL activity in the trade unions and the sad state of WAM. He typically proposed sharper internal party struggle to force the reluctant members to build up the WAM organization. Rosen disagreed and called for abolition of WAM altogether and the establishment instead of Party fractions on the job. It was the logical culmination of the "Struggle Against the Right-Wing Drift." Obviously after two years of struggle against the Right-Wing Drift, "30 for 40" was too opportunistic a slogan to organize workers around, and, although WAM was an exact replica of the Party's program in other respects, it didn't organize workers on the basis of dictatorship of the proletariat. Since RTR III had declared that workers could and should be won directly to communism, WAM and "30 for 40" were "right-wing obstacles" to the growth of PLP in the labor movement. 155 A Party fraction that produced "continuous on-the-job struggle 52 weeks a year led by (the) Party and (the) Party's ideas" 156 was the answer. After Rosen spoke, Linder made an immediate and unnecessarily obsequious 180 degree turn and stated he agreed with Rosen who "always saw things better than the rest of us." The discussion ended shortly after that. 157 WAM was out. PL fractions were in, and the slogan "30 for 40" was shelved. From now on the Party's own anarchist program was said to be broad enough to organize workers around.

Naturally this kind of thinking was so removed from reality that it only increased the tendency for anarchist exemplary actions. PL'ers who still participated in mass actions got short shrift. When the PL leader in Philadelphia, a president of a small welfare worker's union, participated in the leadership of a three-week militant strike of 100,000 Pennsylvania state workers in July, 1975, he received no plaudits from his comrades in the NC but only brickbats for the drop in *Challenge* sales that accompanies his leadership role in the mass struggle. Instead of inquiring why workers in a mass struggle situation have no use for *Challenge*, the NSC decided that the

Philadelphia "comrades were not putting the Party forward, this was not true communist leadership but revisionism." 158 The PL'er in question was heavily criticized and was no longer invited to NC meetings.\*

On the other hand, those members who got themselves involved in useless, isolated defeats were written up as heroes. When the Kansas City PL leader was fired from her job in September, 1975, she stood on a desk to give a speech and then was dragged out by guards, but was unable to unite with the union organizers on her job. 160 In the same month a PL'er working for the State of New Jersey was suspended for handing out a leaflet on his own calling for a job action, but was unable to get any fellow workers to sign a supportive petition.161 In October PL's only miner was kicked off the job by his fellow miners after he and PL members from near-by Pittsburg held a forum to denounce the "fascist" union president. Arnold Miller. 162 To support this last anarchist exemplary action, Wally Linder developed a novel tactic for PL - Mailgrams. Linder called all PL Party leaders with orders that each PL branch was to send a mailgram to the Union president denouncing his actions. In short order Mailgrams became a major PL weapon in the struggle during the fall of 1975. When a PL teacher in Connecticut and later a PL phone worker in the South were fired, Linder called all the areas and a stream of Mailgrams were sent out to the local Board of Education or boss or union president by PL'ers all over the country 163 The tactic had zero results except to serve as a fig-leaf to cover the lack of PL's influence in the mass-movement. Here, however, the ultimate logic of the anarchist, exemplary action was clear. The PL member was isolated from, if not downright hostile to his fellow workers. Therefore PLP was to shower the boss with petitions for mercy, not signed by the PL'ers fellow workers but by equally isolated PL'ers in other areas. It is for this type of thinking that Lenin coined the slogan "Left in Form, Right in Essence." It is very "Left" to denounce "fascist" Miller or to stand on your desk and lecture the other workers about your communist beliefs, but the only counter to the bosses attack that PL could come up with was to send a protest Mailgram to the boss.

Very little serious trade-union work survived the winter from 1975-76. The only exception in basic industry was General Dynamics at Norwich, Ct. A Veteran PL worker, Bruce Burns, who some

<sup>\*</sup>When that unfortunate man pursued sufficiently sectarian policies so that his fellow workers, who at one time respected him, threw spitballs at him, he was once more re-instated on the NC.159

how survived the earlier retreat from the T-U movement, had been working there 5 years. He took the WAM and "30 for 40" line seriously and had built an impressive base at the plant under exceedingly difficult circumstances. During the 3 month strike in 1975 Burns' influence as a militant and an incorruptible fighter for the working class (and through him the influence of PLP) increased to the point where on October 6 (14 weeks after the start of the strike) he was able to organize 100 people to bust the no-mass-picketing injunction, despite severe company-police pressure. From this a caucus grew, and strike support committees arose at near-by Connecticut colleges. Workers and working class students joined PL. But internal conflict arose in the late spring of 1976 between the appointed Connecticut Party leader, a middle class professor, and almost all of the members, who were of working class origin. Burns appealed to Linder and then to Rosen to intercede, thinking that they valued the only real industrial base PL had left. This was a miscalculation; the work at General Dynamics diverged from the sectarian "Party fraction" approach more than Burns realized, and was not valued very highly in New York. Burns and his club were told to submit to the leadership of the NSC appointee but they refused and the nine-member club was expelled. PL lost an organized base of 50 industrial workers close to the Party. (August, 1976.) But the NSC in a September 20 letter to NC members was satisfied with its action: (illegal under the Constitution) and accused Burns of "... abandoning communist ideas to 'work through the union movement'." Here 165 the NSC let slip the basic reason for its displeasure with Burns: he was still working within the union movement instead of jumping into anarchist exemplary actions. In fact he was just winding up a campaign for the union presidency when he was expelled by PLP.

### VII

CAR's founding convention was organized around *opposition* to the academic racists and eugenicists a la Herrnstein, Jensen & Co. It was a big success. Some 1,200 people came in New York, another 250 in Los Angeles. At the Conventions, however, the Party narrowed down CAR by about two-thirds by putting forward the line, no free speech for the academic racists. Through its control of the apparatus PLP ensurred that the line of no free speech for racists was in effect adopted 166

One of the constant problems about PLP was the general contempt for democracy held by the leadership. This was an internal problem, a problem with the line on mass work, and a problem in understanding the dictatorship of the proletariat. The dictatorship of the proletariat combines the broadest possible democracy for the working classes — a democracy 1,000 times more democratic than anything achievable under capitalism\* — with the suppression of the former ruling classes. Obviously crass inciteful *racism*, for example KKK types, would be suppressed, but the dictatorship would be careful not to cut too wide a swath and suppress wrong ideas, that are thought to lead to racism. These ideas, for example the psuedoscientific theories of Jensen, et al, should be sharply opposed, exposed and debated but not necessarily suppressed. This is the best way of training the proletariat to understand real science from false science and to defeat wrong and harmful ideas through ideological struggle.

Thus it is a debatable point whether "No Free Speech for Academic Racists" is a proper slogan for the dictatorship of the proletariat. What is certain is that it is an absurd slogan for the mass movement of our time. It spits in the face of the people, who in the main, believe democracy should be *extended* not curtailed. Such a slogan is a big departure from the Bolshevik pre-revolutionary tactics which always emphasized the demand for democratic rights, a democratic republic and academic freedom. A slogan so totally out of touch with the realities of where people are at was bound to narrow down the CAR organization to only those who held to PL's questionable ideas on the dictatorship of the proletariat. CAR as a potential mass group was killed at its founding convention.

From then on CAR was but PLP under another name. Every hesitancy in making the CAR line exactly like the PL line in that aspect was considered a manifestation of "the right-wing drift" and CAR's line progressively narrowed more and more, especially after the failure of CAR-led Boston Summer of 1975. By 1975 the line of CAR was now to include "Death to the Fascists" (in essence a call for armed struggle) and by 1976 "exposing the two-pronged strategy of nationalism and racism"167 (note the order). CAR's occasional newspaper, *Arrow*, in its Dec. 1976 issue, echoed Challenge regarding the "threat" to U.S. imperialism of "Soviet influence" in Southern Africa. At a major rally in April 1977 the CAR line as enunciated by the national chairman of CAR in a carefully

<sup>\*</sup>Lenin, in fact called it a million times more democratic: "Proletarian democracy is a million times more democratic than any bourgeois democracy; Soviet power is a million times more democratic than the most democratic bourgeois republic." (Lenin, Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky)

planned speech included scathing attacks on Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and almost every national liberation movement in Africa. On April 29 in Madison, Wisconsin "CAR led a sharp attack on black separatist Stokeley Carmichael here today. . . CAR members boldly took the stage and. . . exposed Carmichael as an. . . enemy of the working class. CAR. . . must not hesitate to attack Carmichael as other black. . . separatists in the future. . ."165 In the short period since its birth the NSC brought CAR full circle from a potentially broad group focused against racism to a carbon copy of PL focused on attacking the *nationalism* of those *oppressed by racism*.

### VIII

With the issuance of the document "Revolution, Not Reform" in October 1976 (RNR), PL incorporated the utopian and anarchist theoretical errors of RTR III into a guiding line, an "operating strategy," for its practical work. RNR marked the complete break with the strategic Marxist-Leninist concept of the mass line, the distinction between slogans of action on the one hand and the agitational slogans on the other and thus with the need for united front tactics. We have seen how PL already eschewed these Marxist-Leninist concepts in practice. RNR opens by analyzing PL's problem: "We have found ourselves applying far too much of our time and thinking to building militant reform struggles. ... "169 (sic!!!) For PL to make this "self-analysis" after PLP completed its four retreats of the sixties and then in the seventies shelved the "30 for 40" campaigns, retreated from anti-war activity on any level, narrowed CAR to a useless carbon-copy of PLP, was a joke in bad taste. The opposite was true. PL found itself "applying far too much time and thinking" on how to get out of "militant reform struggles." The NSC claimed RNR was another "new contribution to Marxism" by PLP because it dealt with the relationship of the reform struggle to revolution. This, of course, was self-serving, ahistorical arrogance on the part of the NSC; the ideas in RNR were put forward long ago by Bakunin and other anarchists, a number of ultra-leftists whom Lenin had to defeat and more recently by contemporary "Left-wing" Trotskyites like the U.S. Spartacus League. Lenin, in his book What is to be Done profoundly expounded on the need to inject revolutionary politics into the reform struggle. What RNR did contain (that What is to be Done? did not) was a rejection of and attack upon the struggle for reforms: "Reform builds the system. The Party's role therefore is to make revolution that destroys the system not to make reform and build it."170 As Lenin would have said "What a pearl!" PL had "discovered" that the masses, by militantly *fighting against* the oppression they suffer as a result of the capitalist system, are somehow "building" that system! And, therefore, "the Party should not be involved in "making reform." With these formulations PL again *revised* Marxism, both concerning the nature of reforms under capitalism as well as the role of revolutionaries in the reform struggle. Concerning the *nature* of reforms Stalin pointed out:

Some are of the opinion that Leninism is opposed to reforms. . This is absolutely untrue. Bolsheviks know as well as anybody else that in a certain sense 'every little bit helps'. . . it is not a question of reforms . . . but of the use that is made of reforms . . . with revolutionary tactics under the existing bourgeois regime reforms inevitably serve as instruments that disintegrate the regime, instruments that strengthen the revolution — a stronghold for the further development of the revolutionary movement, 171

Concerning the significance of the *struggle* for reforms Marx observed:

The general tendency of capitalist production is not to raise but to sink the average standard of wages or to push the value of labor more or less to its minimum limit. Such being the tendency of things in this system, is this saying that the working class ought to renounce their resistance against the encroachments of capital, and abandon their attempts at making the best of the occasional chances for their temporary improvement? If they did, they would be degraded to one level mass of broken wretches past salvation. By cowardly giving way in their everyday conflect with capital they would certainly disqualify themselves for the initiating of any larger movement. 172

And in regard to the *role of revolutionaries* in the reform struggle the Communist International, in a document drafter under Lenin's guidance in 1921, declared:

The Communists must take part in all the elementary struggles and movements of the workers, and must defend the workers' cause in all conflicts between them and the capitalists over hours and conditions of labor, wages, etc. . . It is only through an every day performance of such elementary duties and participation in all the struggles of the proletariat that the Communist Party can develop into a real Communist Party. It is only by adopting such methods that it will be distinguished from the propagandists of the hackneyed, so-called pure socialist propaganda. . . It is only through leading the working masses in the petty warfare against the

onslaughts of capitalism that the Communist Party will be able to become the vanguard of the working class, acquiring the capacity for systematic leadership of the proletariat in its struggle for supremacy over the bourgeoisie.

("Thesis on the Organization of the Communist Parties" adopted by the 3rd Congress of the Communist International, 1921)

It is clear from these brief passages that Marxist-Leninists can only gain the leadership of the working class movement by joining the struggle for reforms at their present level and leading that struggle on all fronts. Only from this vantage point will Marxist-Leninists be able to guide the working class to revolution and socialism.

The classical anarchists of the mid-1800's held the exact views of PLP and were strongly opposed by Marx. Michael Bakunin, one of the main anarchist leaders of this period, looked with scorn upon all fights for immediate reforms, advocating *immediate insurrection*, and he endorsed strikes only in the sense that they were small insurrections. The logic of the RNR document clearly leads toward modern anarchism.

### IX

The anarchist essence of the new "Revolution not Reform" line was exposed in stark relief as loyal PL cadre began to carry out the new line around the country. In Detroit, PL's main "on-the-job" work was based on a member who worked as a functionary at the Kercheval welfare office. On February 4th, 1977 Detroit PL mobilized all its forces city wide to hold demonstrations of two dozen people outside this welfare office chanting "The blood of the pig must flow in the street."\* Soon PL "escalated" by sending a PLer who was not an employee into the welfare office to engage in fist-fights with the office security guards.173 When these mindless actions finally succeeded in getting the lone PL cadre in the office fired, that cadre jumped on top of his desk, waved a Challenge around declaring, "I am a communist and will not allow myself to be turned into a racist pig," and was quickly ejected by the security

\*A picture of a demonstrator carrying this provocative but totally apolitical slogan was actually given a featured treatment in the November 25, 1976 Challenge. The anarchist rhetoricians promised to have bosses "choking on poison."

†This man was the same one who initiated the Mack Avenue sitdown. In his case, we can see the tendency of anarchism to degenerate from a more mass to a least mass situation and from basic industry to an office of the government.

quards. This was hailed on the front page of Challenge as the way "a communist party. . . can win."174 Linder immediately sent out a call to all PL areas for protest mailgrams to the District Supervisor of Detroit Social Services as the National Party's "revolutionary response to this 'fascist atrocity'." Challenge in a front page appeal also asked PL members to send in their telegrams. However, in Detroit the local organization took the "Revolutionary situation" more seriously. The local Party chief had previously declared at an NC meeting in November that "we can't wait six months for an insurrection," and now he made arrangements to bring sandbags into the PL office. Then the Detroit leadership made concrete plans for the imminent insurrection. When Rosen heard about this, Linder was dispatched post-haste to Detroit to cool down the local hot heads and undoubtedly to explain the difference between loud talk about insurrection and taking the talk seriously.175 The whole episode was a comedy of ultra-left adventurism mixed with rightwing opportunism (the mailgrams), local posturing about revolution and panic in the head office lest the Detroit police take the posturing seriously.

In New York City the anarchist tendency was fairly solidified in the practical work before "Revolution Not Reform" was published. A typical example was the "Battle of the Turnstiles" PL organized in August, 1975. The summer of 1975 was a time of unprecedented municipal layoffs and cutbacks; the potential was great for broad mass action and indeed many thousands did participate in mass action. But PL was always on the outside looking in when the mass protests took place. So PL had to play its "vanguard" role and at the end of the summer, 50 PL members "angrily marched to the 103rd St. subway station and stormed over the turnstiles and through the doors, protesting the transit fare hike, the cutbacks and layoffs." This of course provoked a fight with the police. Five PL members were arrested and beaten. Challenge then billed this relatively minor incident as a "Labor demonstration for a general strike on the West Side of Manhattan."176 Actually thousands of New Yorkers jump over the turnstiles every day, in order not to pay the fare, but when PL does it, it is a "labor demonstration for a general strike."

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These anarchist actions not only became the general rule as they had been in 1971 (before the re-entry into the trade-union movement), but were now hailed on the front pages of *Challenge* as

examples for the whole Party. This had not happened in 1971, and this made the whole trend, now given a "theoretical" basis in RNR so self-destructive. Each anarchist action fed on the last and by late 1976 PLP was visibly sinking fast. In San Francisco, where there still remained a modicum of sense on how to do mass work, a determination arose not to go down with the sinking ship: to try to open a debate in PLP, if possible, to reverse the Party's suicidal course; but at any rate not to go down to destruction with PLP. The Camp Pendleton 14 Campaign became the focus of these sharpening contradictions between the NSC and the Bay Area PLP leadership.

In November 1976 a group of 14 Black marines at Camp Pendelton in Southern California, supported by virtually all the Black marines on the base, struck against racism when they attempted to break up a KKK meeting on base. This followed months of struggle against the KKK, including the use of various official channels. The "Pendelton-14" were quickly thrown in the Brig and charged with attempted murder and conspiracy. The PL leadership in San Francisco immediately mobilized the California Party to launch a mass campaign in support of the Pendleton 14. From the outset of this campaign, a sharp two-line struggle developed over strategy and tactics for the defense effort. The San Francisco leadership proposed establishing the broadest possible Camp Pendelton 14 Defense Committee with the mass line of "Free the 14," "Stop the KKK," and "End Racism;" and the initiating of the broadest possible United Front in support of the "14." The Los Angeles leadership opposed this effort to actually lead a mass anti-racist struggle and opposed even more seriously fighting to win the freedom of the 14. "We do not care whether these guys are freed or not, that's not our concern. Our concern is revolution, not reform demands," the Los Angeles PL leader stated at a West Coast leadership meeting, 177

The San Francisco leadership defeated the Los Angeles leadership at a meeting of the West Coast leadership and the campaign began to assume, by PL standards, a fairly broad mass character. Dozens of community groups, student governments, some union locals and, particularly, numbers of Black student and community organizations including the Black Panther Party, endorsed the Defense Committee's scheduled March on April 2nd. A team from San Francisco was dispatched to Oceanside over the protests of Los Angeles leaders. Many Black marines, including the Pendelton 14 themselves, began to gravitate around the Defense Committee. Mass meetings were held in San Francisco and the broadest and biggest PL-led campaign in two years began to take shape. The NSC now made aware of San Francisco's "rightist deviations" by their loyal adherents in

Los Angeles grew increasingly uncomfortable with the relatively successful development of the campaign.

Concurrent with the two-line struggle over the Pendelton campaign, a critical two-line struggle had developed over the relative strength of U.S. and Soviet imperialism and the tasks of Marxist-Leninists in regard to fighting U.S. imperialism. In the October 21st *Challenge* the NSC had printed an article entitled, "Rise of USSR as Top Imperialist Dog." The article ignored many facts and distorted others and even made up a few in order to justify its untenable position that the USSR was the strongest imperialist power in the world today and therefore the main enemy of the people of the world. *Challenge* articles followed which began to take a social-patriotic color. Dann and Dillon wrote a letter to the National Committee refuting the *C*-D position and warning of the serious political consequences that could be engendered by this erroneous *C-D* view. Their letter was comradely in tone and called for "healthy Party debate."178

It was in this political setting of the two-line struggle over the "Top Dog" controversy and the Pendelton campaign that Dillon and Kelly departed for the NC meeting of January 15 & 16, 1977. Rosen and Leonhardt met with Dillon the night prior to the NC meeting. Dillon told Rosen he wanted to open up the general question of united front in his report to the NC on Pendelton. Rosen replied by launching a vehement attack on Dillon and Dann for having written the letter to the NC disagreeing with the "Top Dog" article. Rosen told Dillon he had "a position" that differed from the NSC and thus would inevitably end up "taking the road of Bill Epton" and others in splitting the Party. When Dillon still maintained his position Rosen became more and more antagonistic reverting to the psuedo-psychological explanations for Dillon's "bad attitude." 179

The next day Dillon gave a report to the NC defending the united front approach to the Pendelton campaign and launched a general critique of the infantile "leftism" and sectarianism that pervades PL's thinking and practice. The NC exploded in anger: "There is no such thing as a left deviation," one NC member exclaimed. "You should not be building the Defense Committee. We want to smash all organizations except PL and CAR," shouted another. "The way to get media coverage for the Pendelton 14 is to occupy the radio and TV stations," contributed Scheer. 180

Rosen and Scheer also revealed their view towards how a Party leader should relate to the mass movement when they criticized Dillon for leading the mass work in the Pendleton campaign and ordered him to withdraw and spend his time collecting *Challenge* 

sales figures. The PL document, "Revolution not Reform," was cited by Rosen and Scheer as the ideological basis for this vitriolic attack on united front work around immediate mass demands in general and the Pendelton campaign in particular. Dillon approached Rosen after the meeting and requested there be a minority report from the meeting and a Party-wide debate. Rosen ignored the request. Unable to give to the San Francisco membership a full report of what went on in the NC by Party rules, which forbid debates in the leadership to be repeated to the membership, Dillon and Kelly, supported by Dann, temporized by postponing a report and carrying on the Pendleton campaign as before, hoping somehow the NSC would ease its hostile position and a compromise could be reached. This was foolish whistling in the dark on their part.

The split that followed the January NC by two months was inevitable. It was the result of there existing in the Party two diametrically opposed lines, and of there not existing within the Party any mechanism of resolving the conflict. "Two lines in the Party is one too many," wrote Milt Rosen to the other NSC members just prior to the split. 181 Because the San Francisco leadership hoped to avoid a split, while at the same time refusing to submit to the NSC, the months of February and March were months of some of the most intense inner-Party struggle PL ever saw. For Dann, Dillon, Kelly and the other Marxist-Leninist forces that fought the NSC line on the Camp Pendleton Campaign the struggle was an eye opener. PL's reactionary line on this campaign, the scab line during the State strike, the retreats from SDS, "30 for 40" and the T-U movement, and the anarchist practical work was now seen as a derivative of the line of RTR III. All this became clearer. What the majority of San Francisco members saw now when they looked at PLP was not a Marxist-Leninist Party but a reactionary anarchist sect, not an anti-racist force, but a force which equated the nationalism of the oppressed with the racism of the oppressor and a group whose ultra-left demogogy now could no longer cover up its fear of the masses.

To the PL'ers who had worked long and hard to build the campaign to free the "14" the scabby, racist *Challenge* editorial of March 17 was the last straw. In the past *Challenge* editorials had attacked every mass movement led by "revisionists," "nationalists," i.e. anyone not in PLP. Now *Challenge* attacked a movement led by PLP. At a time when the Party members were trying to mobilize for a state-wide march in Oceanside, the slanderous editorial, which implied that the Defense Committee was under the control of bankers and politicians, 182 was seen as nothing less than pre-meditated sab-

otage of the March in Oceanside. This was the rightist essence of the "leftist" NSC rhetoric. (The "Leftist" NSC was in objective alliance with the rightist KKK, which was also out to stop the March.) And the editorial was a great help by negative example in clarifying the two-line struggle in PLP.

Rosen's arrogant attitude during his visit to San Francisco on March 23, 1977 (immediately after kicking Dann, Dillon and Kelly off the NC and the local leadership) was likewise a great help in teaching the Marxist-Leninist opposition the futility of trying to stay and struggle within PLP. Rosen had the unique and unpleasant experience of being confronted by over 100 members and friends, including the Fourteen Marines, who were not afraid to call Rosen a racist to his face. The Marxist-Leninist Opposition quoted chapter and verse of Lenin and reviewed PL's unhappy history in order to vehemently expose and thoroughly refute PLP's anti-Marxist line. Rosen was on the defensive the whole night. The NSC loyalists were clearly only a small minority. 183 Twelve days later, came the split; 72 California members and J. Harris, who was in Birmingham, quit PL.

The small group of NSC-loyalists, in order to establish their credentials as good anarchists engaged in some small, foolish, exemplary actions that cost two of them their jobs in the month following the split. But in Los Angeles, where the 60-member Party group now became the center of PL on the Coast, anarchism ran wild with both ludicrous and dangerous results.

On April 16 the Davis Cup Tennis Matches were held in Los Angeles. The bloodstained Apartheid Regime in South Africa sent its representatives. A broad spectrum of forces on the Left were were determined to protest the appearance of the racist South African team. One of the groups, an anti-racist committee in Pasadena, had been working with a PL member and invited PLP to be part of the coalition that would demonstrate on Saturday, April 16. The anarchists scornfully rejected the offer of unity and set their own purely revolutionary demonstrations on Sunday so as not to be seen in the same block as these reform-minded groups. The result was a united front demonstration of 1,000 Saturday that militantly invaded the tennis courts, disrupted the Davis Cup Matches, made clear to the racists that representatives of the Aparthied Regime were not welcome, no matter what their guise. On the day following as a ludicrous anti-climax, PLP, disguised as CAR that day for reasons best known to themselves, held a lonely picket line of 40 isolated people, which was praised by the Los Angeles Times as an "orderly picket of 40 people" in welcome contrast to the unruly mob the day

before. ("Left in Form, Right in Essence.")

On June 18 the anarchist leadership in L.A. held a demonstration proportedly in support of illegal aliens (but which had the opposite effect), that ended in a fight with the police. Some 29 were arrested and many of the remaining undocumented workers in PLP found themselves in jail on felonies without bail, facing almost certain deportation. The danger of anarchist leadership to these PL members who now face grave hardship as a result of criminally negligent local leaders had been brought home. The Los Angeles PL leadership had no recourse but to hire a team of lawyers to try to unravel the knot with which the anarchists had tied themselves. ("Left in Form, Right in Essence.")

But here we will end the chronicle of PLP and try to draw some conclusions. PLP as an organization, declining in numbers, with zero influence on the mass movement, still exists and is likely to exist for some time. Anarchism was a natural trend among the petty-bourgeoisie in an epoch when the right-wing opportunists dominated and destroyed the International Communist Movement. We can now draw some conclusions on the differences between anarchism and revolutionary Marxism-Leninism based on the history of PLP. No further useful purpose would be served in attempting to follow the further history of the Party.

## **CHAPTER 10**

## THE RETREAT FROM MARXISM-LENINISM

The evolution of PLP from a Marxist-Leninist Party into an anarchist party is the history of struggle between two lines within the Party - a Marxist-Leninist working class line vs. the petty-bourgeois anarchist line. With each defeat of the Marxist-Leninist opposition a concurrent process occurred in the leadership, a process of corruption of the leadership, convinced of their own infallibility, in short a process of bourgeoisification. Thus a cadre like Linder who was once a revolutionary worker became a petty-bourgeois hack, and at the top level, Rosen and Scheer, step-by-step lost their feeling for the working class and for the international communist movement; they slowly turned into corrupt bureaucrats, similar to the ones they had once fought in the CP. In the middle level the process occured also: New recruits with no experience in mass work and less understanding of Marxist-Leninist theory were hired as "fulltimers." They lost what ties they had to the working class or student movement and instead increasingly emphasized ties with the paymaster in New York. This process occurred quantitatively throughout the 15 year history of PLP. Throughout this period individual members fought the retreats, criticized the sectarianism and struggled for a Marxist line. They were almost always put down and the anarchist tendency became more solidified. This process took qualitative leaps in the major struggles the leadership waged against Marxism-Leninism. This was mainly because in these struggles the the NSC felt threatened, and unquestioning loyalty to the leadership became the sine qua non of each cadre. Meanwhile some of the better Marxist-Leninist cadre were lost.

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The key internal battles between Marxism-Leninism and anarchism were:

(1) The 1967-68 struggle to prevent the retreat from the anti-war Movement. The student forces, most involved in the anti-war movement took exception to the article Rosen wrote attacking the anti-war Resistance. Both the Berkeley and Boston clubs protested ineffectually that the article would tend to isolate PL from the anti-war movement. But neither group put the question very sharply

and did not see the connection between the retreat from the anti-war movement and PL's wrong line on Vietnam.

- (2) The 1967-1968 struggles of the various Harlem leaders Mc-Adoo, Couglass and Mulzac against the PL retreat from the BLM. They exposed the racism inherent in this shameful retreat but did not see the connection with the retreat from the anti-war movement. Unfortunately these forces acted singly and were unable to unite themselves or other Marxist-Leninist forces in PL.
- (3) The 1968-1969 struggle of the San Francisco State leaders, Levin, Dillon, and Randle, to oppose the racist NSC-line on opposing preferential admissions and Black studies. They fought only locally, however, and submitted to the NSC to one degree or other, after several meetings. Randle, who submitted the least, made his displeasure widely known, called for "democracy in the Party," criticized the retreat from the T-U movement and said racism in the Party was the "key" question.184 He was expelled shortly afterwards, while in prison on charges arising out of the State strike. Levin, who submitted the most, dropped the issue as a hopeless struggle in the context of the PL organization, but quietly dropped out of the Party three years later. Dillon, however, constantly attempted to re-open the question. He tried in 1973, 1974 and 1975 to re-open the question for discussion on a national level, and on each occasion the NSC moved quickly to squelch any discussion from rising.
- (4) The 1969-1970 struggle of Bill Epton vs. the leadership. This was the crucial round in the battle between Marxism-Leninism and anarchism. Epton launched a many-sided attack on the politics of the NSC. He issued a comprehensive document which took the PLP to task for:

## a.) Abandoning the BLM:

"... we, in the party, along with the leadership have gone on a binge in attacking every Black organization that has come into being in the last few years." 185

b.) The retreat from the T-U movement then currently embodied in the rectification of "students out of factories:"

"Our students and 'intellectuals' went into the shops and factories, armed with what they thought to be truth and Marxism-Leninism. When they were not successful they were told it was their 'background,' their petty-bourgeois hangups. . . the leadership was not self-critical that maybe they armed the students and 'intellectuals' with something else other than Marxism-Leninism." 186

- c.) The phoney *Challenge* Summer project which wrecked all the T-U clubs:
  - "... Oh we've heard the stories that light the road to upping the Challenge sales and the turn to the working class that the party's 'new' line represents and how many wonderful letters the party receives, etc. Tell us about how many PL cadre are in the shops where these papers are sold, conducting struggle against the bosses. Don't tell us that this cadre or that cadre told the workers that they are 'communists' and haven't been involved in organizing those workers to fight the boss. Telling workers we are 'communists' does not make us communists,"187

## d.) Racism and male chauvinism in the leadership of PLP:

- "... Racism has been a conscious policy handed down by the 'centralized' leadership of the Party and has then infected the ranks... the Party leadership has never organized a consistent fight against male chauvinism, just like they never organized a consistent campaign to wipe out racism in our ranks."188
- e.) The self-imposed isolation of PL from all international revolutionary movements:
  - ". . . What has happened is that PL has set itself up as the world's leading Marxist-Leninist Party on all questions. Those parties around the world, and those liberation movements that happen not to conform with PL's 'line' are labeled as 'revisionist,' 'dupes,' not serious revolutionaries and so on. . This arrogance toward other Marxist-Leninist parties is seen as the worst kind of nationalism: U.S. Chauvanism."189

# f.) Abandoning democracy in the Party:

". . . In our party we have 'centralism without democracy.' That centralism is centered, primarily in the person of the party chairman . . . Comrades we are governed by the Dictatorship of the Party Chairman!"190

Thus Epton put his finger on most of the anarchist essence of PL's politics even though he did not attack the retreat from the anti-war movement nor the retreat from the student movement and thus did not see the developing PLP anarchism in all its aspects nor as a repeat of historically similar anti-Marxist trends. Unfortunately Epton's opposition to the Party's line was not known outside New York until the end, (he had always loyally obeyed the NSC rule of secrecy and centralism within the NC). Therefore it was impossible

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to rally much support outside of New York, and he put more faith in the CCP to help out than was warranted.

The NSC, however, was totally unable to answer Epton politically and made no attempt to do so. The NSC issued "A Report to the Party from the NSC on Inner Party Struggle" as an answer. The first page of the report discusses a successful buffet luncheon the New York party held; the next four pages discuss previous inner Party struggles with the conclusions: "1. Some of the criticisms made of us by those who disagree often have an aspect of validity. Our enemies always use our shortcomings against us so they can confuse us. 2. Virtually all those who fought against the Party and quit were very arrogant, individualistic and often nuts." Then "Keeping this in mind, we will tell you a few stories." What follows is five pages of incredibly detailed stories about alleged personal defects in some friends of Epton's. Then two pages about Maoists trying to organize; two pages about some mistakes Epton had made in the past, a page which quotes Vince Lombardi, of all people: "Follow the game plan." and that's it. Epton's detailed and political charges were not even given a passing glance. But the juicy gossip about one of Epton's friends, the core of the NSC reply, was better than a soap opera. In place of political struggle the NSC relied on its tight control of the organizational apparatus to spread the vilest kind of slanders and gossip about Epton. The complete political bankruptcy of anarchists was evidenced by their trading in gossip and soap-opera tales as their only resort to dealing with Marxist-Leninists.

This was the crucial round of inner-Party struggle because after Epton was dismissed from the PL leadership, the NSC, now certain of their infallibility, issued RTR III. This they claimed, was the "highest development of Marxism-Leninism," "The *Communist Manifesto* of our time," and it became a sacred calf for the Party to kneel down in front of. Even when the leadership wanted to fight sectarianism for a brief period, they were hemmed in by the anarchist theory of RTR III. The Party as a living force was doomed after 1971.

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It is not too surprising that after RTR III, the study groups were converted into study-action groups that read only *Challenge*, at that time J. Israel proposed that all books by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao be banned from cadre classes at all levels as hopelessly outdated and incomprehensible to workers. This was not acted on

right away, but by the Convention of 1973, Israel got his way. The NSC report to the Convention said that:

"The fundamental classic which our Party should study is, 'Road to Revolution III'. . . The NC doesn't believe that reading the other classics is particularly useful. . "191

Opposition was expected to the workshop, which was to report the proposal to the floor, was packed with Boston members and NC members already bound to fight for the NC report. Some New York, San Francisco and Canadian members fought the proposal, but unless they attacked RTR III and the whole anarchist line of PL, they had no answer for the argument that Marx and Lenin deviated greatly from RTR III. Nevertheless the NC argument that workers could not understand Marx was refuted by the Canadians who described their successful study groups, which used the "classics." But it was all for nought. The result had been pre-ordained by Rosen, Israel, and Leonhardt, the latter of whom chaired the workshop. First the workshop, then the convention passed resolutions that specifically banned the use of the "classics" in study groups.

After the split with the Boston group in 1974, on the initiative of the San Francisco and the Canadian leadership, the NC in the summer of 1974 was confronted with the question again. During a struggle in the NC meeting, a number of NC members proudly related how they never read "any of these books." The outcome, however, was that the ban was lifted. A study guide using a wide variety of Marxist classics was proposed from San Francisco. But in 1975 Rosen countered with his own study guide that relied almost exclusively on PL material. In 1975 the California Party proposed the use of Badayev's Bolsheviks in the Czarist Duma and the CCP's polemical anti-revisionist articles of 1963-1964. Both these proposals were ignored by the NSC, and only in Los Angeles and San Francisco were there any systematic use of basic Marxist texts. The rest of the Party studied only Challenge and occasionally a PL magazine article. Actually study groups even in California were poorly and irregularly attended. A 1975 goal of having 80% of the members in study groups was never even approached; very few non-members were attending study groups by 1976, 192

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The split with Boston also allowed the question of Stalin to be

brought up again. An attempt was made to revise the anti-Stalin line of RTR III, without specifically criticizing that sacred text. Rosen and Scheer were open to this ploy, because as CP'ers of the old school the anti-Stalin slanders in RTR III had never sat well with them. They had agreed to those formulations at the time as an opportunistic compromise with some of the bitter Stalin-baiters who were instrumental in the writing of RTR III. Accordingly in 1974 two articles for *PL magazine*, "On Trotsky," and "On Solzhenitsyn" were written. In the guise of attacking these two, the articles revised much of the anti-Stalin portions of RTR III. The articles were not without serious weakness; one weakness was the short shrift the articles gave to Lenin and Stalin's concept of democracy within the Party and their toleration, nay encouragement, of independent views. The articles foolishly called this "liberalism."

Nevertheless these were attempts to revise PL's verdict on Stalin and to begin a discussion on the question of the process of the restoration of capitalism in the USSR. Though published they were never accepted by the Party which never could make up its mind when capitalist restoration took place. A subsequent article in C-D stated that morale of the Soviet Army today is at least as good as it was in 1945; it also stated that the "quality of life" in the USSR is moving ahead. 193 If these statements are true then it follows that the restoration of capitalism took place before 1945 when Stalin headed the CPSU. Otherwise we are led to believe that the morale of an imperialist army improves and that the quality of life "moves ahead" after a socialist country returns to capitalism. When confronted with this contradiction Rosen, who authored the article, refused to admit error and insisted that Soviet soldiers fought only for nationalist reasons during World War II. 194 All this shows that PLP has given in to the long-time popular prejudice of some of its petty-bourgeois members in claiming that capitalism was restored at some point during Stalin's tenure, if not before. Thus PL again swung around toward Trotskyism.

The anarchists, who developed out of the anti-revisionist movement within the CP, faced a contradiction. On one hand, Rosen and Scheer, as old CP stalwarts who came into political puberty during World War II, in the "Stalin era," they get their backs up when younger PL members innocently point up that the logic of the RTR III politics is that socialism never really existed in the USSR, and perhaps Trotsky was right. On the other hand, there is no escaping the conclusion of the anarchist thinking: The wage differentials were capitalist; the NEP was all wrong; the foreign policy was "nationalist;" the 3rd International had a "thoroughly revisionist

strategy;" the peasant policy sought to implant capitalism; the Army was nationalist; Soviet culture was "Bourgeois;" this is how PL describes the USSR under Stalin and Lenin. What PL sees is not socialism; when the anarchists attack Stalin from their point of view they inevitably end up by denying the dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR under Lenin and Stalin.

### IV

There was not much change in PL's thinking about imperialism in the years 1967-1972. Indeed since, according to PLP, the U.S. imperialists had forced the Vietnamese to negotiate their surrender. the U.S. imperialists were seen as very powerful, if not omnipotent. As late as a 1972 NC meeting Marxist-Leninist forces in PLP were sharply put down by Rosen when they suggested that the war in Vietnam caused big losses to the imperialist position. The correction of these one-sided views took place in the winter of 1972-1973 and typically the pendulum swung too wide, missed the mark and now the U.S. imperialists are seen as far weaker than they actually are. The dollar devaluations of that period were seen as severely weakening the U.S. investment position but were not understood as helping the U.S. trade position. Watergate was seen as evidence of extreme instability, when the fact that that crisis was resolved peacefully and, more or less, constitutionally, illustrated the relative stability of the U.S. governmental system, as compared to what happened in France in 1958, in the USSR in 1964,\* or in China after Mao's death. These were minor straws in the wind at the time and only Dave Levey was perceptive enough to protest the growing onesidedness on the question of imperialism during the 1973 preconvention discussion.

During the oil crisis of 1973-1974, however, the NSC, now convinced that U.S. imperialism was declining inexorably, made a totally subjective analysis of that crisis. The NSC bought the ruling class line hook, line and sinker and almost alone of the U.S. Left believed that there really was a shortage and the embargo was for real. They were convinced the Arab bourgeoisie had gone over to the side of the Soviet imperialists and that the U.S. oil companies were suffering great losses and the desperate U.S. imperialists were about to go to war to "recoup their losses." 195 In the NC only Dann argued

<sup>\*</sup>In France in 1958 the Fourth Republic was overthrown by Fascist Army officers in Algeria, DeGaulle took power, and established the Fifth Republic. In 1964 Khrushchev was overthrown by Brezhnev in a semi-military coup.

against this position. He gave a great deal of data from the bourgeois press showing that there was no shortage; he proved that the Arab bourgeoisie was tied to the U.S. not Soviet imperialists and that the U.S. oil companies were both the cause and the main beneficiaries of the oil-shortage hoax, which only served to treble worldwide oil prices. Rosen interupted at length and gave a long speech about how in New York a service station attendent had been threatened with a gun by an irate motorist unable to get gas and this incident proved the shortage was for real and the capitalist system unstable, and then he closed the discussion. 196

This type of subjective reasoning is typical of how PL approached the question of imperialism. If the facts don't fit the theory then ignore the facts or make up a few. In essence anarchism is a form of idealism and the anarchists need not consider material realities that don't jive with their homespun theories. In 1975-1976 the NSC developed the theory (definitely another "new development" of Marxism-Leninism) that:

- (1) the main contradiction in the world is between U.S. and Soviet imperialisms, thus putting in a very secondary position the contradictions between workers and capitalists, and between capitalism and socialism.
- (2) military might determined the power of an imperialist country, thus ignoring the overriding emphasis Lenin gave to finance capital in determining the relative strength of imperialists.
- (3) the Soviet imperialists were top dog and the U.S. was weakening fast.

To "prove" this last point the anarchists issued an incredible array of foolishness which illustrated their abysmal isnorance of the real world as well as their mulish insistance on their own rectitude. Among other ludicrous examples they:

- (1) claimed that U.S. defeat in Vietnam was due to Soviet arms; people's war was ignored. 197
- (2) pretended that "vast" Rumanian oil fields are at Soviet disposal; in actual fact Rumania is a net importer of oil these days. 198
- (3) said that U.S. mainly exports foodstuffs; in fact the U.S. mainly exports machinery. 199
- (4) argued that Uganda is under Soviet control and in almost the same breath said the recent rebellion in Zaire's Shaba province was Soviet controlled; if so, why did Uganda send troops to help crush the rebellion?200
- (5) dismissed Alaskan oil as not useful to the U.S. imperialists because the Soviets are a short distance away in Siberia and can

knock it out, but then in the same article they say that bombers are useless militarily; also wouldn't the reverse hold true for Siberian oil?201

- (6) warned Puerto Rico about the danger of a Soviet takeover; what can you say to this?
- (7) insisted that the recent victories of anti-Soviet parties in India did not change India's status as a Soviet "satellite." 202
- (8) claimed that the CP workers in Italy, France and Spain were pro-Soviet; even Breszhnev doesn't think like that 203
- (9) created a theory that Saudi Arabia was a major antagonist of U.S. interests in the Mid-East, even though Saudi money has restored Egypt, Sudan, Syria and possibly Yemen and Somalia among other nations to the U.S. orbit. For their military expertise the PL publicists relied on some columnists and generals who were making their annual alarming statements about the "weak status of U.S. defences" in order to get a bigger slice of the budget.

The expected effect of all this was not to engage in debate. The anarchists long since gave up any interest in debate. The NSC was trying to ship up enthusiasm for PLP among an increasintly apathetic membership. The idea was nuclear war is immanent. The hope is workers will rally around PLP once they see that war and fascism is the only other alternative.\* At one NC meeting after area reports couldn't cover up the fact that the Party was declining and morale badly sagging, Rosen said the problem was the members didn't believe that war and fascism were imminent.203 Thus the insistence on the subjective militarist theory of inter-imperialist rivalry and the idea that the aggressive Soviets would attack a weakened U.S. are vital for the PLP leadership.

The real effect of all this, however, was to convert PLP to social-patriotism. With the Soviet imperialists as the main enemy and the U.S. imperialists depicted as underdogs or even victims all over the world the unintended effect was to whip up support for the U.S. ruling class, to cover up the crimes of the U.S. imperialists abroad, to lend credence to the more extreme militarists' demands for more arms, and to attack all national liberation movements, no longer as merely misguided nationalists, but in fact as tools of the major enemy, Soviet imperialism.

V

The most striking sign of PL's decline from 1968 to 1973 was the

<sup>\*</sup>PLP long since dismissed other left groups as agents of one variety or other.

difference between Milt Rosen's opening address at the two PLP conventions. In 1968 even though the retreat from the anti-war movement was substantially underway and the first signs of a retreat from the BLM were evident, PLP was still very much at the center of the movement. And the 1968 Convention reflected the mass movement, or at least PLP's participation in the mass movement. Rosen's "Build a Base" speech reflected PL's leadership in the mass struggle; it was largely devoid of idealism and drew political lessons from material reality.

In 1968 Rosen in his talk to the PL convention drew examples from the student-worker rebellion in France, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the Brooklyn College rebellion, and PL's work in New York's garment district. The speech was rich with material examples and was therefore politically very instructive. In 1973, Rosen instead of referring to material reality, repeated the children's tale of "The Little Engine that Could," a five-year old's tale of how a tiny choochoo engine realized his life's dream by pulling a great big diesel train over a mountain. Rosen went on to say that PLP could "be the little Party that could."204 Here was the baldest possible statement of voluntarism, and pure wish-fulfillment. Here in this childish talk, Rosen betrayed PLP's departure from materialism to idealism. The "Revolution not Reform" document issued three years later merely applied this idealistic voluntarism to the work. Only in children's tales do dreams come true. When PLP lost its grip on material reality the idealist dream turned into a nightmare of isolation and decline.

Towards the end, PL retreated from Marxism-Leninism up and down the line. It abandoned materialism for subjective idealism, convinced they were at the center of the universe, they interpreted\* all events according to how they affected the development of PLP. "Nothing in the (domestic) class struggle is positive unless PLP is built out of it" became a cardinal principle of the Party. This is really existential thinking. Internationally all events had to fit PL's analysis of declining U.S. strength, growing Soviet aggressiveness, and approaching war and fascism — a completely subjectivist mode of thought. PL's strategy and tactics, as we saw, were based on subjective desires rather than a sober assessment of material reality; this was idealism. In March, 1977, the NC declared that Lenin's brilliant

guide, Left-Wing Communism, should be "thrown out the window, stomped on and spat upon."205 Rosen also declared earlier, but in the same context, that the Bolsheviks were the cause of modern revisionism because they fought for "reform issues such as 'Bread,' 'Land' and 'Peace' and didn't fight for socialism."206 The history of the International Communist Movement was reinterpreted to prove PLP was the highest development of Marxism-Leninism. Even Marx's time-tested theory of surplus value was thrown out and a new concept of surplus value created, called "Progressive Labor Economics."207 PLP left Marxism-Leninism behind and convinced itself that the subjective mishmash of Trotskyism, Bakuninism, utopian socialism and anarchism it created was an "advance" and that "Road to Revolution III is the Communist Manifesto of our time."208

### VI

For Progressive Labor the words PL and communist are interchangeable. It was never considered possible that another domestic group could aspire to PL's unique position "as vanguard of the working class." Nor could an individual be a communist unless he was a member of PLP. After 1971 this rule of thumb was extended abroad and, according to PLP's fantastic conception, every Party abroad had to subscribe to the principles of RTR III in order to qualify as communist. PLP was at the center of the universe and the Party sat in judgement on other groups in the world and in almost every case found them unqualified to enter the pearly gates.\*

Within the U.S. PLP went to some lengths to guarantee its own isolation. In 1971-1973 the Party purposely organized fist fights with other left groups, so as to make united actions possible. PLP refused to attend functions or demonstrations where "revisionists" were participating. Since every organized left group was "revisionist" as well as any individual Marxist who was not a member of PLP, PL was rapidly isolated and the NSC hoped that nothing would intervene into the consciousness of the rank and file that might interfere with the myth that PLP was at the center of the universe. Nothing upset the NSC more than the occasional call from rank and filers to participate in actions which also included "revision-

\*Only the Canadian Party of Labor was admitted to heaven to sit at the feet of PLP. However, Rosen never trusted fully his "Canadian comrades" and kept a sharp eye on them. There were a few short-lived admissions such as the now-defunct groups in Israel and Sweden which adhered to RTR III. The Swedish group drew the logical conclusion from RTR III and dissolved. The Israeli group was crushed.

<sup>\*</sup>The editor of CHALLENGE declared in all seriousness that the ABC TV series, ROOTS, was meant as an attack on PLP. Indeed PLP re-acted as if it were so, because there followed several issues of CHALLENGE with hysterical front-page editorial "counter-attacks" on the TV series.

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ists." In general, if a local PL group by some chance found itself in the same place at the same time with "revisionists" or their "dupes" they could be expected to answer to the NSC as to why this couldn't have been avoided. PLP's attitude toward other groups on the Left is reminiscent of the mentality of teen-age gang leaders, in sharp contrast with that of the Bolsheviks in the pre-Revolutionary period. Sometimes the Bolsheviks united with the Mensheviks, sometimes not, as the needs of the times required. But Lenin's Bolsheviks never regarded themselves as the center of the universe, the one and only true socialists around, although they would have had more reason that PLP to make these claims.

When PLP put forward the claim to be the one and only vanguard of the working class they did so because "our line is correct and the workers will eventually see us as the vanguard." At no time in PL's history did more than one two-thousandth of one percent of the U.S. workers ever think of PLP as their vanguard. Again the contrast with the Bolsheviks is instructive. Although their line was correct this was not the reason the latter were regarded as Russia's vanguard. The Bolsheviks were the vanguard of the Russian working class because they were so regarded by the workers themselves. Even before the Party was formed, those who were to become the Bolsheviks had led a substantial if not the majority section of Russia's working class day in and day out on major and minor issues for at least ten years. In short order the overwhelming majority of Russia's workers came to regard the Bolsheviks as the only Party that spoke for their interests. This was proven during the elections to the 1912 Duma, when the Bolsheviks won all the seats in the workers' curia.

Today in the U.S. less than one per cent of the working class regards any of the Left Parties as the best representative of the class (and PLP accounts for a miniscule fraction of that 1%.) For any Party to declare itself the vanguard at this point is to sign its own death warrant. A "vanguard" that is regarded as such by less than 1% of the workers will almost inevitably tread the same path PLP blazed. The center of the universe mentality leads to increasing arrogance, increasing subjectivity and decreasing opportunities for debate within and without the Party and the concomitant sectarianism, inescapable subjective idealism and inevitable splits will follow as the Sunday hangover follows the Saturday night drinking spree. In the anti-Soviet revisionism movement it appears that the Revolutionary Communist Party\* is already fairly well on its way—to repeating the essence of PLP's tragic history, and lately the

October League\* also has shown every sign of wanting to follow suit. As Marx remarked, history repeats itself, the first time as a tragedy, the second time as a farce. In the context of the revolutionary movement of the sixties, the demise of PLP was a great tragedy, but in today's context the spectacle of two, three, many "general staffs" of the working class all stubbornly repeating the fatal errors of PLP threatens to become such a farce that communists may be regarded as a laughing stock by the working class before they are regarded as a vanguard.

A real Marxist-Leninist Party does not need to declare itself as the vanguard. If it truly be the vanguard it will be so because tens of millions of workers so regard it and everyone will know it. Until that time is reached humility, a sense of proportion, and a willingness to listen, learn from and unite with those with whom one disagrees are indispensible necessities.

The one book of Lenin's that the PL leadership never tired of quoting from was What Is To Be Done? Even after they had decided to throw out the window, stomp and spit on Left Wing Communism, (which was Lenin's specific advice to a communist movement at our particular stage of development) the PL leadership was ripping quotes out of historical context from What Is To Be Done in order to buttress their sectarian politics. But What Is To Be Done discusses the period after the socialist movement had achieved leadership of working class. At that historical point it was necessary to consolidate a general staff of the working class and that is why Lenin wrote the book.

How does Lenin conclude the book, answer the question "What is to be done?" He answered, "Put an End to the Third Period" (of Russian Social-Democracy). The third period, according to Lenin, was a period of backwardness and vacillation in the *socialist-led* working class movement. The second period was where the "Social Democrats went into the working class movement without for a moment' forgetting either the theory of Marxism, which brightly illuminated their path; or the task of overthrowing the autocarcy." The first period was the period of the rise of a small socialist trend, mainly among intellectuals, isolated from the working class movement.

Obviously in the U.S. today we are still in the first period. Lenin's advice to us today would be "Put an End to the First Period." We have to enter the stage of development where communists go "into the working class movement without 'for a moment forgetting either

<sup>\*</sup>Formerly the Revolutionary Union.

<sup>\*</sup>Now the Communist Party U.S.A. (Marxist-Leninist)

the theory of Marxism," which will brightly illuminate our paths or the task of overthrowing U.S. imperialism. This is the stage in which we find ourselves. And that is why Lenin wrote the book, Left-Wing Communism, as advice to the then newborn communist groups in Europe.

"The immediate objective of the class-conscious vanguard of the international working class movement, i.e. the Communist parties, groups and trends is to be able to lead the broad masses.

(Left-Wing Communism, Lenin's emphasis)

A real Marxist-Leninist Party group or trend has to recognize this and act on it or die as a relevant force. The distorted over-emphasis on winning advanced workers, consolidating the vanguard, fighting economism, "building the Left" is an obstacle to the pressing task the fusion of the Communist Movement with the working class and democratic movements of the moment: Marxist-Leninists who refuse to emphasize the struggle against sectarianism, ultra-leftism and subjective idealism become obstacles to the development of the Party and will only delay the fulfillment of our efforts.

In the end PLP refused to admit that there even was such a thing as a "Left deviation" but by then the corpse of PLP had become an excellent negative example of what happens when the struggle against sectarianism is ignored. At an earlier stage sectarianism was recognized by PL as a danger, but always secondary to the danger of right-wing opportunism. "Leftism" was and is and will continue for some time to be the main danger. This recognition is absolutely essential for the development of a Marxist-Leninist vanguard. By not focusing on sectarianism as the prime danger PLP went under. Rosen often said, "No movement ever died because of 'left' errors." Wrong again, Mr. Rosen. Probably thousands did, but since such groups never led masses and always remained insignificant one is not likely to hear of them. PLP has now joined these. But the wreck of PLP will have served a useful purpose if Marxists will learn the truth that in the period of isolation from the working class movement, Left errors are the most deadly because they prevent even the possibility of Right errors.

#### VII

Internationalism is the opposite of nationalism. Nationalism can never be the ideology of the working class nor of Marxist-Leninists. This is a fundamental principle of Marxism-Leninism. But to say

that all forms of nationalism are always and at all times equally reactionary and to claim that nationalism can never play a progressive role reduces the principle of internationalism to an absurdity. It denies the dialectic of material reality, refuses to recognize the changing relationship of class forces that make certain classes progressive at one point and reactionary at another time. The dialectics of Marxism profoundly examine all changing relationships of classes and nations and avoid such metaphysical nonsense as "All nationalism is equally reactionary."

When, in the present conditions of the U.S., white racism is equated with Black nationalism what you have is more than just a departure from dialectical materialism. The Party which, like PLP, says that "Racism and Black nationalism are equally reactionary" becomes itself a reactionary fetter on the revolutionary movement. Under no circumstances can a Marxist-Leninist party content itself to issue abstract calls for "multi-racial unity" in the face of racist attacks on Black people or to launch into fierce attacks on Martin Luther King and Black nationalists while giving only passing reference to white racists. The spearhead of the attack must be on racism, and the overwhelming bulk of the propaganda must expose to the white workers the evils of racism. Multi-racial unity will not develop out of mere calls for Black and white to unite, and it will certainly not develop out of one-sided vicious attacks on Black nationalists or other black leaders.

The experience of PLP shows that once the equation is made between the nationalism of the oppressed and the racism of the oppressor the organization slips into a de facto racist position. The PLP attacks on the BPP were racist in fact; PL's campus slogan of no preferential admissions of Black students (but preferential hiring of Black maids and janitors) was racist in fact; the PL slander on the Camp Pendleton 14 Campaign was racist in fact; the PL split with the Puerto Rican communists and its abandonment of the struggle for Puerto Rican independence was U.S. nationalism in fact. All the verbiage about "internationalism," "multi-racial unity," "struggle against the twin evils of racism and nationalism" couldn't cover up the fact that PLP had slipped into racism and U.S. nationalism. This is a lesson all Marxists have to learn. The metaphysical equating of all nationalisms will inevitably lead to a tendency to succumb to the strongest nationalism, that of the ruling class, and in effect to adapt oneself to racism. Those who refuse to learn this lesson will inevitably repeat the racist errors of PLP.

In the same way that they turned from fighting racism into emphasizing the fight against Black or Puerto Rican nationalism, PLP quit the struggle against U.S. imperialism in favor of the struggle against the enemies of U.S. imperialism. At first they considered the struggle to expose Soviet revisionism, and by extension to expose the Vietnamese and other national liberation fighters, to be more important than the struggle against U.S. imperialism. In the end they merely borrowed wholesale from the arguments of the U.S. militarists and judged that the Soviet imperialists were about to start World War III.

The PL anarchists never dressed up their retreat from fighting U.S. imperialism with such slogans as "United Front Against the Two Superpowers" or "Mobilize the third world, unite all the forces of the second world willing to struggle, neutralize the United States and strike the main blow at the Soviet Union."\* PLP was never that "sophisticated." PLP just quoted the Committee on the Present Danger, Evans and Novak, the B-1 Bomber advocates and editorialized at length about how Soviet aggressiveness against a weak U.S. was going to cause a nuclear war.

Any way you dress it up the retreat from the struggle against U.S. imperialism as the main enemy of the people of the world is counter-revolutionary. In the current period no Marxist-Leninist movement can be built on the absurdity that the Soviet Union is the main enemy of the people of the world.

It is the U.S. imperialists that are the main support of racist Apartheid regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia; the U.S. imperialists are the paymasters of the aggressive Zionist military colonists in Palestine; they are the bosses of the reactionary monarchy in Saudi Arabia, and of the brutal regime of the Shah of Iran; the U.S. imperialists are the ones propping the corrupt dictatorships in Zaire and Kenya; they give the orders to the fascist overlords in Thailand. Taiwan and South Korea; the U.S. imperialists control the bloody militarists of Indonesia, as well as the Marcos martial-law regime in the Philippines; the U.S. imperialists are the bulwark of the reactionary governments of torturers and mass murderers in Chile, Argentina. Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, Nicaragua, Haiti and El Salvador. The U.S. imperialists fought with might and main to defeat the national liberation struggles in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Angola, Guines-Bissau, and Cuba; they sabatoged the Portuguese Revolution, ordered first their Jordanian lackeys, then the Lebanese fascists to engage in a fratricidal slaughter of the Palestinian freedom fighters, and

\*William Hinton, President of the US-China Friendship Association, attributes this position to the leadership of the CCP (Guardian, May 5, 1977). This certainly seems to be the case. c.f. Peking Review (August 9, 1976) p. 11.

stage-managed a host of bloody fascist coups around the world from Greece to Indonesia, from Chile to Thailand. The U.S. imperialists have the bulk of the investments in Asia, Africa, and Latin America; it is they, through their network of finance capital, who are the owners in fact of the bulk of the mines in Africa, the oil wells in the Mid-East, the manufacturing industries in Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea, the resources of Indonesia, the plantations and mines and factories in Latin America, and a significant portion of the industry in Western and even some in Eastern Europe. Naturally the Soviet imperialists don't have clean hands either, (Czeckoslovakia in 1968, Ethiopia in 1977) but they are puppies compared to the U.S. imperialist wolves. A real Marxist-Leninist Party would forthrightly state that the U.S. imperialists are the main enemy and direct its fire accordingly.

### VIII

The deviation which led PLP to develop from a democratic party to an autocratic party destroyed the possibility of correcting the other deviations. The lack of democracy cut PLP off from the rank and file and from serious opposition trends and thus ensured that the other serious deviations and misestimates of the objective situation would go unchallenged. The average member of PLP had no more say in the running of PLP than the average voter has in the running of the U.S. government. A small bureaucracy impervious to pressures from below ran the Party. Rosen's views always, without the slightest exception, prevailed in the NC. And NC members who disagreed were forbidden to raise their views with the rank and file. Thus dissatisfaction from below was always met with the unanimous unyielding opposition of higher bodies. The disatisfied members were left with no option but to quit. The disatisfied leaders had no way of fighting for their line inside the Party in the face of Milt Rosen's opposition and were forced to organize splits or quit quietly. The Party was by this method kept small but monolithic.

If Marxist-Leninists examine the internal workings of PLP and do exactly the opposite of PL they will be more or less on the right path of how to build a real Marxist-Leninist Party. Fortunately, however, we have more than the negative experience of PLP to go on; we have the positive experience of the Bolshevik Party. Lenin said he considered it better to have a tolerant party life "even if it were to involve a certain departure from absolute obediance to discipline."209

In fact the history of the Bolshevik Party was the history of a

very sharp inner-Party struggle and democratic discussion. leaders very often differed from one another, openly before the members and even publicly in print. In the twenty-five years between the split with the Mensheviks and the final split with the Trotskyites, there were no major permanent splits. This is an incredible record when compared with PLP's record of nine major (and a score of minor) splits in only 14 years. Every one of those splits remained permanent and severely antagonistic. (While PLP may win the U.S. record for splits, all of the other groups, Maoists, Trotskyites and the C.P. have had their share. Even small Marxist-Leninist collectives of 20 people have split into permanent antagonistic groups that hardly speak to each other.) The Bolshevik split with Mensheviks was not anywhere as childishly antagonistic as our modern splits. The Bolsheviks continued to regard the Mensheviks as socialists and there were a number of unity conferences to re-unite the two parties, as well as in-between groups that attempted to consiliate differences. Naturally the ideological differences between Marxism and Revisionism could not be bridged and these unity conferences and conciliators failed, but still the Bolsheviks often operated with the Mensheviks in various joint formations such as the Duma fraction or in the Soviets. Only after the Mensheviks joined the Whitequard uprising they were regarded as out-and-out counter-revolutionaries, and even then Lenin made a distinction between the active counterrevolutionaries and those, like Martov, who though a Menshevik and a revisionist to the last, respected the legal bounds of the Soviet state; he was tolerated, nay encouraged, to remain in open opposition by the Bolsheviks even under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Bolsheviks avoided splits because they had a correct line and led the mass struggle and also because they allowed the sharpest possible differences to arise *openly* before the members and the masses. Their correct general line and mass line could never have been maintained without the broad democracy and toleration of diversity that they practiced.

One example of the lengths Lenin went to in order not to split the Party was during the debate on the Brest-Litvosk Treaty. The background was that the German imperialists had made almost intolerable demands on the young Soviet state. Lenin and Stalin viewed it as imperative to accede to the demands in order to save Soviet power, but they were outvoted in the Central Committee. When the Germans advanced deeper into Soviet territory, made fresh demands and seemed on the verge of capturing the capital, the Central Committee finally voted by a bare majority to sign the peace treaty. In this desperate situation the Moscow Regional

Bureau of the Party led by Bukarin refused to go along. Here is what Lenin said about the situation:

The Moscow Regional Bureau of our Party, in a resolution adopted on February 24, 1918, has expressed lack of confidence in the Central Committee, refused to obey those of its decisions "that will be connected with the implementation of the terms of the peace treaty with Austria and Germany," and, in an "explanatory note" to the resolution, declared that it "considers a split in the Party in the very near future hardly avoidable."

There is nothing monstrous, nor even strange in all this. It is quite natural that comrades who sharply disagree with the Central Committee over the question of a separate peace should sharply condemn the Central Committee and express their conviction that a split is inevitable. All that is the most legitimate right of Party members, which is quite understandable.210

Lenin then went on to sharply and scathingly refute the political positions of the Bukharin group. However, the eight-page political refutation is not accompanied by any call for organizational measures.

What is important here is the attitude Lenin took toward inner-Party struggle. Organizational discipline was always secondary to sharp political discussion, which Lenin welcomed. When in 1909 Bolsheviks like Bogdanov and Lunacharsky got together with some Mensheviks to write up a philosophical criticism of Marxism, Lenin didn't dream of taking organizational measures or of coming up with cute verities such as, "Two lines in the Party, one line too many," but on the contrary, used the occasion to write a book himself, not only refuting the critics, but also putting forth a brilliant exposition of Marxist philosophy (Materialism and Empiro-Criticism). The critics, Lunarchsky and Bogdanov, remained in the Party and crossed swords more than once again with Lenin.

The Bolsheviks never had a rule that there should be democratic-centralism within the Central Committee. All leaders were free to argue their point of view to the membership. Lenin frequently was in a minority and openly fought for his position. Very rarely were articles in the Bolshevik press unsigned; the various Party leaders signed their articles, took personal responsibility for their position and in this way drew the membership into debate. On important questions the discussion was widened way beyond the Central Committee, even if that meant compromising security. The timing of the October, 1917, insurrection was not only discussed in the Central Committees but also widely in the Petrograd Party Organization.211

having the means for that minority (which may not include most of the NC) to make their views known and understood. More than

this, they must have the confidence they'll be listened to and taken

seriously if they do argue their points.

Between democracy and discipline the former is the more difficult to achieve. Workers under capitalism are trained by school, union and factory to obey orders and respect authority. What they are not trained to do is to debate politics, to exercise their democratic rights, and to see themselves as part of the authority. The Party has to devote primary attention to developing the democratic aspect of Party life. Real proletarian discipline will come about only if there is full scale democracy.

The history of the last 100 years and more proves that socialism is on the agenda and that a Marxist-Leninist Party can be built in the U.S. The failure of PLP can be a good thing if we study the pitfalls and avoid the errors. We *can* accomplish the task before us. The Chinese Communist Party pointed out in its open letter to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union of March 30, 1963:

A most important lesson from the experience of the international communist movement is that the development and victory of this revolution depend on the existence of a revolutionary proletarian party.

There must be a revolutionary party.

There must be a revolutionary party built according to the revolutionary theory and revolutionary style of Marxism-Leninism.

There must be a revolutionary party able to integrate the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the revolution in its own country.

There must be a revolutionary party able to link the leadership closely with the broad masses of the people.

There must be a revolutionary party that perseveres in the truth; corrects their errors and knows how to conduct criticism and self-criticism.

Only such a revolutionary party can lead the proletariat and the broad masses of the people in defeating imperialism and its lackeys, winning a thorough victory in the national democratic revolution and winning the socialist revolution.

If a party is not a proletarian revolutionary party but a bourgeois reformist party;

If it is not a vanguard party of the proletariat but a party tailing after the bourgeoisie;

If it is not a party representing the interests of the proletariat and all the working people but a party representing the interests of the labour aristocracy;

If it is not an internationalist party but a nationalist party:

If it is not a party that can use its brains to think for itself and acquire

After Lenin's death when the Trotskyites organized an opposition they were given every opportunity to put forward their views publicly. Trotsky published polemical articles in the Soviet press and as the debate sharpened it was carried to the factories, where the leading Trotskyites debated the leaders of the majority of the Central Committee. In the period 1925-27 the whole Soviet working class joined the debate. The organizational split occured because the Trotskyites joined forces with the anti-Soviet underground and even established relations with foreign intelligence services. Only after the Trotskyite underground murdered leading Bolsheviks were they treated as counter-revolutionaries. Throughout the twenties and early thirties Stalin continued Lenin's policy of toleration of diversity and full democracy. To the end of his life Stalin dealt with his opponents as much as possible politically. When some Soviet economists raised certain revisionist ideas in the early 1950's Stalin took the occasion to write his book, Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR. Stalin also jumped into the debate around linguistics at that time. Later the CCP raised the criticism that despite this there was not enough democracy in the later part of Stalin's tenure. The criticism seems justified. During the Cultural Revolution the CCP developed the wall poster method of opening up inner-Party struggle; Mao-Tse-Tung personally participated in this.

A real Marxist-Leninist Party must emphasize inner-Party democracy. There is hardly ever a good reason to restrict discussion to the Central Committee. The members of leading bodies who are in a minority on any one question must be free to fight for their view within the Party as a whole. The Party press ought to have mainly signed articles, where different Party members and leaders can put forward the most diverse points of view. Nor should any debates be pre-maturely brought to a close by the majority. Unity of action can be quaranteed by majority vote without restricting the minority from continuing to debate its wisdom. The leaders should be able to openly criticize each other. Under these circumstances, elections have real meaning and the elected leaders have real authority. Finally expulsions and harsh disciplinary measures should be reserved for proven counter-revolutionaries and agents. Disagreement should be encouraged; energy and initiative in fighting for minority views would be welcomed by a real Marxist-Leninist Party. Even disobediance to orders should be dealt with politically rather than organizationally, in the way Lenin dealt with Bukharin's Moscow Committee in 1918.

When faced with a new situation, it's usually only a minority who can figure out the correct line. It's not obvious how to deal with new situations, and the only way the right position can be found is by

an accurate knowledge of the trends of the different classes in its own country through serious investigation and study, and knows how to apply the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism and integrate it with the concrete practice of its own country, but instead is a party that parrots the words of others, copies foreign experience without analysis, runs hither and thither in response to the baton of certain persons abroad, and has become a hodgepodge of revisionism, dogmatism and everything but Marxist-Leninist principle; then such a party is absolutely incapable of leading the proletariat and the masses in revolutionary struggle, absolutely incapable of winning the revolution and absolutely incapable of fulfilling the great historical mission of the proletariat.

This is a question all Marxist-Leninists, all class conscious workers and all progressive people everywhere need to ponder deeply.

It is in the interests of helping to ponder these questions that this paper was written.

### **APPENDIX**

Challenge-Desafio (C-D), PLP's newspaper, accurately reflects the theory and practice of the organization. It is tightly controlled by the National Steering Committee and is their main political tool. C-D is used by them to shape the work of the Party nationwide. Challenge sales are considered by the PL leadership to be a central task of Party-building. Party members are encouraged to use CD as their main source of study and information. (Many PL members never read anything else).

For all these reasons, we can see that an analysis of CD can throw some light on the question of PL's failure. Such an analysis shows that *Challenge* is filled with bullying talk, fantasizing, systematic lies and distortions, and contempt for workers.

Challenge talks "tough." The reader is initially confronted with super-"militant" headlines such as: "Smash (Crush, Attack, Flatten, Bury, Rout, Defeat, Stomp, Hit or even Melt) the Bosses!"

Articles often end on empty threats like "Let the Bosses tremble," "their days of fun and profit are numbered!" "PLP will put them six feet under!" "Death and destruction to the fascist capitalist pigs!' (all quoted from C-D 9/22/77).

Occasionally, PLP carries out what they call a "bold" action (which of course falls far short of fulfilling the threats). *Challenge* describes these actions in comical pseudo-military jargon. About a legal and peaceful PL demonstration during the Humboldt Park rebellions in June, 1977, we read:

"A lot of us tend to underestimate the Party's experience and our own experience in the class struggle. The tactical plan [including taking the Chicago Transit Authority to the park], agreed upon at the meeting prior to the march, was excellent. It combined the best aspects of offensive and defensive strategy." (6-30-77, p. 2)

About a small sit-in in an ABC-TV office in Detroit:

# "PLP invades ABC over KKK on TV"

"... we seized an executive office and firmly held our ground until we were all arrested 1½ hours later. We had vowed not to leave until ABC had agreed to our demands. ." [which ABC did not do — and yet the action was termed an overwhelming success] . . . We divided all available forces into two groups — an assault force and a back-up force. . . we drove

past their armed guards and entered ABC — the bosses and their state apparatus are not all-powerful or invincible; they are weak and they can (and will) be crushed! One pipsqueak executive had the audacity to block our path in one of the corridors. That punk quickly moved aside as he realized we were about to turn him into a 'human rug' [Talk about heroism!] and what is more, the police. . . were extremely afraid of us. We were not a large group, but we were armed with an undaunted spirit. . . The ABC-TV bosses and the pigs understood it was not just our small force which they had to deal with but the impending wrath of the entire working class. And that thought had the bastards literally shaking and shivering. . ." [It's amazing they managed to arrest the PL'ers!] (8-17-77 p. 5)

The absurd glorification of these tactics sometimes leads to outand-out sadism:

"The union goon staggered against the wall as blood poured from his forehead. . . Another blow sent him reeling to the floor, he screamed in terror and passed out!" (7-3-75)

The contrast between *Challenge's* tough talk and PL's actual cautious practice was highlighted by a NYC PL leaflet. C-D had run several full page ads for the PL October 1 demonstrations, featuring the red star and a machine gun. From the leaflet:

"Some people think that because there is a gun on this poster we intend to bring guns to the march. . . Eventually millions of workers will pick up guns. . . We do not want people to bring guns to this march, and will prohibit anyone from bringing such weapons."

Challenge described the world not as it is, but as PL would like it to be. The following are a few typical examples.

Headlines: "As Capitalism Wilts, Cities Crumble" (3-10-77), "A Cold Wave Cripples Bosses' Economy" (2-10-77), "Communists Lead Labor Left to Zap Sellouts" (1-29-76).

About PL's October 1, 1977 "Marches for jobs and socialist revolution" which is mentioned 15 times in the twelve pages of the Sept. 22, 1977 issue of C-D, we are told:

"These marches can propel such a mass movement forward to influence millions affected by unemployment and racism, to understand that Capitalism is the cause of these evils and to understand the reason for growing fascism in the U.S. and therefore to smash it." (P. 11, emphasis added).

"Readers, take a giant step towards bringing about the destruction of this decadent capitalist system. March on October 1..." (P. 8, emphasis added).

"When we say joining these marches will put the working class on the road to smashing capitalism and racism, fascism and war, we are not engaged in some idle chatter." (P. 11)

". . . it is for these goals that we are building a mass movement and to welcome thousands of workers into PLP." (P. 4, emphasis added).

In reality, the marches were to be noticed by only a few thousand and influence a few hundred members and friends of PL. PLP has less than 500 members and can look to the recruitment of at most a few dozens in the coming period, which will not replace those lost through splits or attrition. These quotes are typical.

Challenge articles are thoroughly permeated with wishful thinking, unrealistic estimates and out-and-out fantasy. It's hard to know where to draw the line between fantasy and outright pervarication, but it's clear that often, Challenge goes beyond day-dreaming and consciously lies. For example, on 1-12-77, the C-D headline announced "Texas Farmworkers Kick Out Sellouts, Take Over Union." The article claimed that the independent and militantly-led Texas Farmworkers Union (TFW) was taken over by rank and filers led by PLP. This report was totally false. In reality, the Chavez staff-members, who had been sniping at the TFW leaders, finally seized the headquarters and the bank account in co-operation with some nationalists and some naive PL friends. However the leadership of the strike movement in the fields remained in the hands of the tested TFWleaders. When a PL cadre from Houston went down to the Valley to pass out that issue of Challenge (The local PL "friends" wouldn't touch it), he was confronted by 20 people who demanded PL retract all the lies in the article. Nothing more was heard in C-D about this PL "victory" in Texas.

On April 15, 1977, at least 800 people demonstrated against apartheid at the Davis Cup tournament in Southern California where a South African team was playing. People poured oil on the court, and a number were arrested. This got national news coverage. PL did not participate (even though invited by the coalition that organized the action). The next day PL had what was praised by the *L.A. Times* as an "orderly picket of 40 people" while a few symbolically unfurled a banner and got arrested. Yet *Challenge's* front page headline story (4-28-77) deliberately confused the two actions, implicitly taking credit for the first one.

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Major anti-racist struggles such as the 10-year fight against the eviction of Filipino and Chinese tenants of the International Hotel in San Francisco, which involved thousands at many levels including militant fights with the cops, or demonstrations against the Bakke decision, also involving thousands, are at best mentioned in passing, and then only to attack the leadership of those struggles and assert the correctness of PL's line.

Another type of omission is PL's defeats and setbacks, which are covered up or not mentioned at all. An example: for at least a year, every article on a trade union struggle concluded that a PL fraction was needed at that shop. Yet no PL fraction with a lifespan of more than one meeting ever existed anywhere in the country!

Finally, all facts which would tend not to support the current line are also excluded. Thus in the abovementioned Texas article, the PL united front with the Chavistas, the La Raza Unida and the Brown Berets was not mentioned because the NSC line then was, that workers were ready to follow PL leadership directly and united fronts with "revisionists and nationalists" were outlawed.

The PL leadership's justification for the exaggerations, lies, distortions and omissions is that *Challenge* looks "dialectically" at what is "coming into being" and emphasizes it. But given PL's record of thoroughgoing retreat from the mass movements why should we believe that PL leadership of the working class is "coming into being." On the contrary, the trend is that PL has been dying a slow death for years, while the Marxist-Leninist Left has been steadily growing in this country.

Who is Challenge written for?

"Svoboda is a worthless little rag. Its author — indeed, this is precisely the impression it creates, that one person has written it all, from beginning to end — claims to write popularly 'for the workers.' But what we have here is not popularization, but talking down in the worst sense of the term. There is not one single phrase without embellishments, without 'popular' similes and 'popular' catchwords. . . Outworn socialist ideas are chewed over in this ugly language without any new data, any new examples, any new analysis, and the whole thing is deliberately vulgarized. . . The vulgar writer assumes that his reader does not lead him in his first steps towards serious knowledge, but in a distortedly simplified form, interlarded with jokes and facetiousness, hands out 'ready-made' all the conclusions of a known theory, so that the reader does not even have to chew but merely to swallow what he is given." (Lenin Collected Works, Vol. 5 pp. 311-12).

Another common C-D technique is to distort figures. C-D (5-12-77) claimed 350 marched with PL for May Day in SF; three separate eyewitness accounts produced totals between 160 and 180 marchers. Two years earlier, at the Los Angeles May Day march in 1975, a member was asked to count the demonstrators. He averaged out the results of nearly 10 counts to find about 500 (no count was over 550). *Challenge* claimed 800. And two years previous to that, at the May Day demonstration in 1973, which C-D claimed brought a "Red Sky Over Washington" with 2500 marchers, actually consisted of 1100 people according to an honest count by the organizers.

Yet another frequent type of lie is by omission. The typical "struggle" article carefully selects the information included to give the wrong impression to readers in another part of the country. For example in C-D (6-22-77, P. 5) is an article about a PL demonstration of "40" at the University of California at Berkeley against anti-Semitic incidents, which had occurred a month before. The article failed to mention that only four demonstrators were UC students (the others were PL members from off-campus). Of these 4, all were white, three had been in and around PL for 7 years, and the other one left the demonstration in disgust during a long, sectarian speech by a PL member

Was this low turn-out of UC students due to widespread apathy on campus? No! To the contrary: the article fails to mention that the PL demonstration was scheduled to conflict with (1) a militant demonstration of UCB students at the Regent's meeting against UC investments in South Africa, and (2) an ACLU-sponsored forum on the Camp Pendleton 14 versus the KKK which was attended by 150 people, including a large proportion of black students and community people.

So the facts clearly show PL's total isolation on campus. Yet C-D concludes the article with the standard "optimistic" paragraph:

"The march was very spirited and well received as several people signed up for CAR and 40 copies of C-D were sold. By going boldly into the dorms and fraternity rows we showed [to whom?!] that students can be won to the anti-fascist and anti-racist line of CAR and PLP."

Some of the more blatant and consistent omissions entail activities by rival Left groups. These are automatically ignored, even if they are germane or central to the subject of the article. For example, the participation in, and even leadership at a certain level of the Revolutionary Union (now the Revolutionary Communist Party) in the West

This quote from Lenin, written in 1901, shows that newspapers like *Challenge* have plagued the revolutionary movement for a long time. The overall low journalistic quality of C-D combined with its contempt for workers as shown by the bullying style, the exaggerations, lies and distortions, guarantee that most first-time readers never buy the paper a second time. This is reinforced by C-D's contempt for the demands and goals of reform movements. About a slate running for union office:

"We will regard the number of union members and friends we bring to Washington, not the number of votes we get, as the measure of our success". (9-22-77 P. 3).

### About a union contract:

"Phone workers won't be fooled with promises of better dental care; we know that healthy teeth mean nothing when they take you to the battlefield!"

"Victory for auto workers in the '76 contract is scores and hundreds of auto workers joining PLP and PLP fractions." (9-16-76)

About the legal defense of one of the Camp Pendleton 14:

"His lawyer plans to appeal, but the main appeal to be made is to the masses of soldiers and workers to crush the racists and demand the charges be dropped." (9-15-77 P. 4)

About the fight for a fired welfare worker's job:

"One worker asked whether we were using Lou Etta's case as a 'publicity stunt' to build the Party. The answer is basically, yes." (10-7-76).

In fact, Challenge is not a weapon of the working class. It is the drug of the PL membership! While many don't pay much attention to C-D, every week, a number of Party members skim through the paper searching for evidence of PL successes. The evidence is scant, but the rhetoric is plentiful and morale is sometimes boosted for another week. The fact that "break-throughs" only last for a week or two (e.g. the Texas farmworkers "victory" mentioned above), that figures are known to be inflated, and that deep inside no one really believes Challenge success stories is immaterial.

This is not to say that there is no fight-back within PL against Challenge. PL members generally don't read very much of C-D.

Most hardly sell it at all. Once in a while criticisms of the paper or of specific articles are raised in club discussions and letters are written. A major battle to improve C-D took place around the 1973 convention. About 20 articles, pro and con, were written for the internal discussion, including one by Milt Rosen defending C-D's style as "sharp" and reflecting "class hatred." Many of the criticisms of C-D were correct and far-sighted, but the convention resolved to keep Challenge as it was, after a "struggle" which consisted mainly of branding C-D critics as "right-wingers."

Some of the criticisms centered around what type of articles should be printed, with many people arguing for more international and analytical articles. In 1976, this point was finally conceded by the NSC. The reason was probably the lack of PL-led struggles to write about. At any rate C-D's format changed. The "analysis" articles on the whole turned out to be disappointing since they continued to reveal PL's ideological poverty and still often lacked data or facts to back up the assertions (e.g. "U.S.S.R. Top Imperialist Dog" which argued that the USSR was stronger than the US and based itself entirely on data carefully selected by military lobbyists in Washington).

But two good developments came in 1976. The first one was two pages each issue of letters, largely unedited and often critical of C-D and PL. These quickly became the most widely read and talked about pages in the paper among PL members and friends.

In addition, a page was devoted to culture and was edited in San Francisco by a knowledgeable member who had been waging a 5-year struggle against PL's gross amateurism in its attitude towards bourgeois and proletarian culture. Previously C-D cultural reviews had exhibited every possible problem from praising racist and sexist TV shows and movies (for example, "About the only good thing to do with a TV set is not to turn it on, except for a few shows that we consider a little entertaining ('Good Times,' 'Mash,' 'Sanford and Son,' 'Mary Tyler Moore,' 'Rhoda' and 'Marcus Welby, MD')" (3-13-75), to attacking revolutionary theatre (several outstanding plays by the San Francisco Mime Troupe, including their production of Brecht's *The Mother*).

For six months the cultural page started to develop some Marxist-Leninist cultural criticism, and was even praised by several non-PL'ers, including several serious revolutionary artists.

But these improvements were at best peripheral and all very short-lived. The cultural page editor was purged just prior to the split for having internally criticized a sectarian C-D review of the TV program "Roots." (2-10-77 P. 10) But at all times in essence

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C-D remained a "worthless little rag." Its bullying talk reflected PLP's anarchist line. Its fantasizing reflected PLP's abandonment of dialectical materialism in favor of idealism. Its lies reflected PLP's corruption. Its contempt of workers reflected PLP's gross sectarianism. And finally, its tiny (but dwindling) readership guarantees its complete insignificance.

#### CITATIONS

#### ABBREVIATIONS FOR CITATIONS

- EA Eyewitness Account: Some 30 former members of PLP contributed to these accounts, including seven former NC members, at least one of whom was present at all NC meetings between April, 1965 and March, 1977. Whenever this citation is used the account has been carefully crosschecked with other witnesses.
- C-D Challenge-Desafio, PL's national newspaper.
- PL PL magazine, PL's national theoretical magazine.
- IB PL internal bulletin.
- CW Collected works.
  - PL, V. 2, No. 2, February, 1963, p. 5.
- 2. PL, V. 2, No. 7-8, July-August, 1963, p. 16.
- 3. PL, V. 3, No. 10-11, September-October, 1964, p. 17.
- 4. PL, V. 3, No. 8-9, July-August, 1964, p. 16.
- 5. PL, V. 10, No. 1, August-September, 1975, p. 65.
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- 8. IB, "Progressive Labor Party National Committee Meeting" June 10, 1966.
- 9. Ibid.
- 10. PL, V. 5, No. 5, October-November, 1966, p. 16.
- "Refutation of the New Leaders of the CPSU on United Action," Peking, 1965.
- 12. EA, IB, "Combat Revisionism" February 8, 1967, IB, untitled report by Milt Rosen evaluating leadership of PL for 1968 Convention (undated).
- 13. IB, "Combat Revisionism" Op. Cit.
- 14. Ibid.
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- 17. C-D, V. 4, No. 6, September, 1967.
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- 19. Spark (PL's West Coast Newspaper) December, 1967.
- 20. EA
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- 34. EA, letter of Bill Epton to Jocelyn Jerome, January 28, 1969, reprinted in Bay Area Internal Bulletin (February-March, 1969).
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- 37. EA
- 38. EA
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- 40. C-D, V. 5, No. 10, January, 1969, p. 18.
- 41. C-D, V. 6, No. 1, April, 1969, p. 18.
- 42. EA
- 43. EA
- 44. EA
- 45. EA, PL, V. 7, No. 1, May, 1969, p. 22.
- 46. EA, PL, V. 7, No. 1, May, 1969, p. 13.
- 47. PL, V. 7, No. 2, August, 1969, p. 13-22.
- 48. C-D, V. 5, No. 5, August, 1968, p. 3.
- 49. PL, V. 7, No. 2, August, 1969, p. 18-19.
- 50. PLP leaflet "Build A United Working Class Movement To Smash Fascism Racism, and U.S./Soviet Imperialism!"
- 51. EA
- 52. NSC letter to Party, June 11, 1970.
- 53. NSC Report to the Party.
- 54. Bill Epton, letter to the Party and Friends, June, 1970.
- 55. EA
- 56. "Revolutionaries Must Fight Nationalism" PL, V. 7, No. 2.
- 57. EA
- 58. EA
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- 62. EA
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- 68. EA

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- 70. C-D, V. 7, No. 3, June, 1970, p. 16.
- 71. EA
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- 73. Report to Party from National Student Collective Meeting, June 28, 1970.
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- 97. Ibid. p. 10.
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- 99. EA
- 100. PL, V. 8, No. 3, November, 1971, p. 11.
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- 103. "A Painful But Necessary Lesson," V. 27 of Lenin's Collected Works.
- 104. EA
- 105. EA
- 106. PL, V. 8, No. 3, November, 1971, p. 42, 44.
- 107. Ibid, p. 27.
- 108. Ibid, p. 28-29.
- 109. IB, May 14, 1977, p. 110.
- 110. "Strange and Monstrous" in Vol. 27 of Lenin's Collected Works.
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- 124. EA
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- 130. C-D, V. 8, No. 5, September 4, 1971, p. 15.
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- 178. IB, January 12, 1977, p. 46.
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- 181. Letter to the NC entitled "Two Concepts of the United Front," March, 1977.
- 182. C-D, V. 13, No. 42, March 17, 1977, p. 2.
- 183. EA
- 184. "Bay Area PL IB, August 1, 1970."
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- 186. Ibid., p. 7.
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- 190. Ibid., p. 3.
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#### OUTLINE OF THE REST OF THE BOOK ....

# Chapter V- Retreat from the Trade-Union Movement, 1969-1971

- 1. PL's conception of Trade-Union work thru 1968
- 2. The Trade-Union Program
- 3. Defeat in the New York Garment Center
- 4. G.E. Strike support 1969
- 5. Rectification
- 6. Challenge summer (1970)
- 7. GM strike support (1970)
- 8. The Unemployment Marches (1971)
- 9. General Electric- Lynn
- 10. Exemplary Actions on the Job
- 11. San Francisco Phone Co. Work to 1973
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- 13. Total Isolation-Summer of 1971

## Chapter VI- "Road to Revolution III"

- 1. PL's relations with China through 1969
- 2. Development of the new line
- 3. Glorying in isolation
- 4. The splits over RTR III- Epton and others quit
- 5. RTR III on China
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